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Media Release

Eastern Ontario Heads of Council Urge Support for the EORN Gig Project

Local momentum continues to build for the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) Gig Project. One hundred-three (104) heads of Council from across Eastern Ontario have signed on to a letter urging the federal and provincial governments to support the project, which aims to connect homes and businesses across the region with ultra-fast internet speeds.

The letter to federal Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development Maryam Monsef and Ontario's Infrastructure Minister Laurie Scott comes following a meeting of nearly 60 wardens, mayors, and reeves. With strong support for the project among the group, they agreed to develop a letter and seek the support of their peers across the region. The letter is also being sent to Premier Justin Trudeau and Premier Doug Ford.

The project would expand fibre to homes and businesses to deliver internet speeds up to 1 Gig (1,000 Megabits per second). EORN has been seeking federal and provincial support for the public-private partnership valued at up to \$1.6 billion. It would include investments by the federal and provincial governments, and the private sector, through EORN's proven model for expanding connectivity in underserved regions.

EORN is requesting \$200 million each from the federal and provincial governments. This is 5.7 per cent of the total funds the governments of Canada and Ontario have committed to broadband expansion. Given that recent analysis shows rural eastern Ontario accounts for about 30% of all under-served households in Ontario, the project offers tremendous value.

The EORN Gig Project offers a comprehensive solution that ensures the region can keep pace with rising demand for connectivity over the long-term. It is critical for the region's economic recovery from the pandemic and will support future economic growth and improved quality of life.

Quotes:

“In less than two weeks, 104 heads of Council in the region signed on to this letter of support. It clearly shows how essential this broadband project is to our communities. A regional delivery model like EORN has proven to be efficient and effective. Our local governments have limited capacity to manage such projects on their own.”

- *Debbie Robinson, Chair of the EOWC and Warden of Renfrew County*

“The letter demonstrates that leaders across our region understand that the EORN Gig project would be truly game-changing for our citizens and businesses. We are thankful for their support and hope that our federal and provincial counterparts will listen to our appeal.”

- *J. Murray Jones, Chair of EORN and Warden of Peterborough County*

“The Gig Project would bring major benefits to our communities, including creating jobs, supporting our children to learn online and to improve access to healthcare services. The mayors of eastern Ontario’s cities and towns are pleased to support this project.”

- *Diane Therrien, Chair of EOMC and Mayor of the City of Peterborough*

About EORN

EORN, a non-profit created by the Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus (EOWC), works with governments and community organizations to improve and leverage broadband access to fuel economic development and growth.

EORN is currently working on a \$300 million plus project, funded by public and private sector partners, to improve and expand cellular services across the region. Building on that project is beginning in 2021.

From 2010 to 2014, EORN helped to improve broadband access to nearly 90 per cent of eastern Ontario through a \$175 million public-private partnership. The network was funded by federal, provincial and municipal governments and private sector service providers. As a result of the project, 423,000 homes and businesses are now able to access services of up to 10 Mbps download. It also spurred more than \$100 million in additional private sector investment in the region, over and above their initial commitments.

About the EOWC

Since its inception, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) has worked to support and advocate on behalf of the 750,000 property taxpayers across rural eastern Ontario. The EOWC covers an area of 50,000 square kilometres from Cobourg to the Quebec border, and includes 13 upper-tier and single-tier municipalities as well as 90 local municipalities. All members work

together as a team, striving to ensure that conditions are in place to make Eastern Ontario the greatest place in the world to reside and do business.

About the EOMC

The Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus (EOMC) is made up of the Mayors of the 10 urban municipalities (separated, single tier) of Eastern Ontario. The committee meets quarterly as a group with the municipal CAOs in attendance to discuss common issues relevant to municipalities in eastern Ontario.

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