



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 27, 2007

**EASTERN ONTARIO RURAL MUNICIPALITIES BAND TOGETHER  
IN BID FOR PROVINCIAL BROADBAND FUNDING**

LANARK COUNTY – The counties and single-tier municipalities of Eastern Ontario, represented by the 13-member Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC), have banded together to apply for \$10 million in provincial funding to expand broadband Internet service for the region's rural communities.

“Addressing the broadband gap is a longstanding priority of the EOWC, because access to this vital infrastructure supports economic development in the region,” said Douglas Struthers, Warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and Chair of the Wardens' Caucus. “We're motivated by a desire to act in the best interests of all Eastern Ontario residents.”

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With Lanark County coordinating the application – and with a looming July 13 deadline for funding requests – the EOWC determined that if each county applied individually for funding, there wouldn't be sufficient impact. In addition, the Wardens wanted to avoid a “winners and losers” approach to program funding by working cooperatively rather than competing with each other, signaling a new approach to program funding for the benefit of Ontario citizens.

“The joint application will likely be for the entire \$10 million, but it remains to be seen if we can capture all of it,” said Lanark County Chief Administrative Officer Peter Wagland in a June 20 Broadband Update.

The cost of bringing broadband service to everyone in the region is estimated at \$57 million. “Very clearly, the province’s support is insufficient to cover all the costs, but a positive indicator for the future” said Mr. Wagland, who is also a member of the Eastern Ontario Broadband Coalition (EOBC), which provided data for the funding application. “Even with private sector investments, which must be part of any application, or any municipal financial contributions, it is unlikely that full coverage can be achieved through this round of funding.” But the allocation can be characterized “as a pilot project for consideration in next year’s provincial budget,” he said.

*Rural Connections: The Ontario Municipal Rural Broadband Partnership Program*, announced in the 2007 Ontario budget, allows individual rural municipalities to apply for up to \$1 million in funding, with the balance of project costs provided by the municipalities, by existing telecommunications providers, or by other private partners. The program is a one-time initiative that seeks to reduce the broadband infrastructure gap in rural southern Ontario, and applicants must show they can begin implementing projects by this October, as well as being able to cover costs by March 31, 2008.

An EOWC analysis, based on EOBC research, estimates that there are 149,552 “un-serviced dwellings” with no access to broadband services in the eastern Ontario region. Providing service from as many as 120 suitable tower locations would cost about \$380 per dwelling, according to the research.

Beyond the provincial funding, the EOWC has also requested federal funding support for expanded broadband services, coordinated through the Eastern Ontario CFDC Network (Community Futures Development Corporation).

The EOWC represents 13 upper tier and single tier municipalities, from the City of Kawartha Lakes in the west to the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry in the east and north to Renfrew County.

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