

Haliburton County Lake Associations

July 20, 2022

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
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The Honourable Gudie Hutchings
Minister of Rural Economic Development
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Honourable Kinga Surma,
Ontario Minister of Infrastructure
c/o Aryn.Azzopardi@ontario.ca

Re: Urgent Need for Improved Telecom Connectivity in Haliburton County

Dear Ministers:

Our lake associations represent a large proportion of the 15,000 residential property owners on lakes in Haliburton County, many of whom are permanent residents and critical to ensuring a thriving economy in the Haliburton area. Haliburton is one of the fastest-growing areas in Ontario, yet for the most part, the telecom infrastructure in our area is woefully outdated, often in ill-repair, and inadequate to meet the business, social and community needs of full-time and part-time residents in our area. Connectivity speeds are far, far below the 50/10 mbps established several years ago by the CRTC as the “basic level” for service in our country, and are often less than 1/.6 bps. We need your help and we need it now!

We have been encouraged by the Eastern Ontario Regional Network Cell Gap Project which seeks to improve cellular connectivity in our area. For safety, economic development, tourism and general communications, this investment is long overdue. We are cautiously optimistic that Rogers and EORN will work constructively with our lake associations as they make investments to improve cellular services in our area.

We are also very encouraged by the announcement of the \$1.75 billion federal Universal Broadband Fund and the Ontario Improving Connectivity for Ontario program with \$4 billion in funding to expand access to high-speed internet across the province. These investments in communications infrastructure have the potential to provide the connectivity which is so badly-needed in our community.

However, we are very frustrated that the process for accessing this funding seems to lie entirely with Technology Service Providers. Local governments and community groups such as ours have no opportunity to provide input, identify needs or ask for priority for funding. As such, the process is very opaque and it is not at all clear that decisions will be made in the best interest of the citizens located in rural areas such as ours, who so badly need improved access as soon as possible.

We ask you to:

- 1) Immediately outline how and when Haliburton County will receive investments in broadband infrastructure; and
- 2) Ensure that Haliburton County remains a priority for infrastructure investments until all properties reach at least the 50/10 “basic level” of service, as defined by the CRTC; and
- 3) Advise us how community groups such as lake associations can be involved in the process of allocating funding to upgrade connectivity in our area and/or how your governments will keep property associations apprised of developments on this issue.

Thank you for addressing this critical issue.

Sincerely,

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