

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 24, 2018**

**Province supports project tackling cellular dead zones across Eastern Ontario**  
***Mobile broadband critical to regional growth***

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) welcomed the Ontario Government's commitment of \$71 million to improve cell service across the region. Ontario Rural Affairs Minister Jeff Leal announced the funding formally at an event in Belleville yesterday.

EORN has proposed a \$213 million public-private partnership to improve both the reach and quality of cellular data services in the region. The federal government and the private sector are also being asked to support the project.

EORN submitted a detailed business case for cell expansion to the federal and provincial governments in May 2017. The project is expected to create 3,000 full-time equivalent jobs over 10 years and spur \$420 million in new business revenue.

According to an engineering study commissioned by EORN:

- About one quarter of the area where there are homes, businesses or major roads in the region cannot access any cellular services.
- Depending on the cell carrier, nearly two-thirds of the area doesn't have enough capacity to provide high quality mobile broadband service given growing demand.

The gaps are the result of market failure. Rural areas don't generate enough revenue for cell carriers to build adequate services. The CRTC recently designated both mobile and fixed broadband as basic services for all Canadians. A public-private partnership would reduce carriers' infrastructure costs, creating a stronger business case to improve services and meet the CRTC's basic services goals.

***About EORN and EOWC***

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) is comprised of 13 members across rural Eastern Ontario, including 11 regional County municipalities and two Single-tier municipalities. It represents the interests and shared goals of 750,000 people in 103 rural municipalities.

EORN, a non-profit created by the EOWC, helped to improve broadband access to nearly 90% of Eastern Ontario through a \$175 million fixed broadband network funded by the federal, provincial and municipal governments and private sector service providers. It works with governments and community organizations to improve and leverage broadband access to fuel economic development and growth across the region.

(more)

### **Quotes**

“This commitment from the province is a great vote of confidence in the project. EORN is building on the investment we’ve already made in fibre optics across the region to close the gap in cell services and improve economic growth, quality of life and public safety.”

- *EORN Chair J. Murray Jones*

“Funding for this project has been the EOWC’s number one priority. The demand for mobile data is growing exponentially, but our region is deeply lacking the needed infrastructure to keep up. We thank Minister Leal, and Minister of Infrastructure Bob Chiarelli, for their support and for advocating for this project at the federal level. Eastern Ontario’s future is at stake.”

- *EOWC Chair Robin Jones*

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For more information, contact:

Lisa Severson, Communications and Stakeholder Relations Officer

Tel: 613-213-8520

Email: [Lseverson@eorn.ca](mailto:Lseverson@eorn.ca)