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Ministry of Infrastructure 5th Floor, 777 Bay Street Toronto, ON M7A 2E1

Subject: Proposal for a Rural Broadband Internet Expansion Program

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing as a resident of a northern Ontario community to propose a Rural Broadband Internet Expansion Program to improve high-speed internet access in underserved rural and remote areas of our province. Reliable internet is no longer a luxury - it is an essential service for education, healthcare (such as telemedicine), business, and daily life. However, many rural communities like ours continue to face slow, unreliable, or nonexistent internet connections.

Description of the Proposed Program: The proposed program would involve investing in broadband infrastructure (e.g., fiber-optic lines, new wireless towers or satellite internet technology) to bring high-speed internet to rural and remote regions. The program could offer incentives, funding, or public-private partnerships with internet service providers to expand their networks beyond urban centers. It would begin with a comprehensive assessment to identify communities with the greatest need (such as those with no broadband service or with speeds below the CRTC's basic service standards). The program would set phased targets to connect these communities to reliable high-speed internet over the next few years.

Objectives:

- Eliminate the digital divide by ensuring that residents of rural and remote areas have access to reliable high-speed internet comparable to that in urban centers.
- Enable rural businesses, schools, and healthcare providers to utilize modern online tools and services, fostering economic development, distance education, and telehealth.
- Improve the quality of life for rural citizens by providing better access to information, government services, and opportunities for remote work or online learning.

Expected Outcomes:

- Substantial increases in internet speeds and connectivity in targeted rural communities, with measurable improvements in the percentage of households having high-speed internet (meeting or exceeding 50 Mbps download / 10 Mbps upload).
- Economic growth in rural areas as businesses expand online activities, farmers use digital tools for smart farming, and entrepreneurs can work from their communities without relocating.
- Enhanced delivery of education and healthcare services, evidenced by greater use of e-learning platforms in rural schools and more telemedicine consultations for remote patients.

Rationale for Government Support: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical importance of internet connectivity; yet many parts of Ontario still lack adequate service. Students in rural areas have struggled with online schooling, small businesses have been unable to fully participate in the digital economy, and patients have difficulty accessing virtual healthcare. By funding rural broadband expansion, the government will promote equal opportunities for all Ontarians, regardless of where they live. This initiative aligns with the province's commitment to improving infrastructure and will yield long-term benefits - from attracting young families to rural areas, to supporting innovation in agriculture, to allowing government services to be delivered more effectively online. Improved internet infrastructure also complements other investments and can serve as the backbone for future technological improvements in areas like emergency services and smart grids.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter and strongly encourage the government to move forward with the Rural Broadband Internet Expansion Program. Bridging the digital divide will empower our rural communities and ensure that no region is left behind in Ontario's growth and prosperity. Thank you for considering this proposal. I am available to discuss any questions or provide further details.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Peter McMillan