



BROADBAND (HIGH SPEED INTERNET) UPDATE

High Speed Internet remains a priority for the Township of Machar. Council and staff remain proactive in sourcing, supporting, and lobbying for High Speed. The Township of Machar has recruited suppliers and hosted presentations at several Council meetings, and are currently actively supporting projects to bring better internet to our citizens. We know this is a concern for our citizens, it's a concern for us too, and there are challenges. We feel it's important to reiterate our efforts and provide a current update, in response to recent citizen dialogue and sharing of some information. Council and staff have remained diligent and proactive on this matter. The support of our citizens, and working together in a combined effort will always achieve a better outcome. We would encourage the support of our citizens through whatever positive contribution you can make, that would assist our efforts to bring High Speed Internet to our community. Information on our effort, which is available to the public on our website is included below. This is just a sampling as these are only the most recent developments. They're taken from agendas and minutes which are posted on our website Council page. Thank you for your support.

May 25, 2020: FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) Voice May 14, 2020 – Covid-19 Bringing rural voices to Ottawa – Improving rural broadband faster; We've been clear that the lack of reliable broadband is a major challenge for rural communities – especially now. The federal government has heard us and is exploring ways to speed up bringing high speed broadband to rural Canadians.

May 11, 2020: Cogeco Update on CRTC RFP Broadband Fund

The CRTC Broadband Fund RFP was originally due on Mar 31, but was extended to Apr 30 as a result of Covid-19. On Mon, Apr 27, Cogeco was advised that the deadline for the submissions of applications was delayed a further month and are now due on Jun 1. As a result of Cogeco efforts and collaboration in the Parry Sound District over the past year, Cogeco was on schedule and thoroughly prepared to submit applications by the initial deadline in Mar. This is only the 1st of 5 rounds of CRTC funding. Cogeco have reiterated their desire to help expand their network in our Township and significantly enhance the broadband service for our residents and businesses by leveraging the numerous broadband funding programs available via the CRTC along with Federal and Provincial Governments. An effective broadband connection has come to the forefront in our Township over the past 6-8 weeks during Covid-19. This has been a priority of Council for some time. The Clerk Administrator reiterated this need to the Ministry when responding on our Covid-19 difficulties (Mar 26). As Covid-19 continues to impact all Canadians and the world, this may present an opportunity to share our municipal challenges that have occurred or have been magnified as a result of the virus and subsequent quarantine, ie work from home and e-learning constraints, etc. This could come in the form of a letter from our Township and directed

to the CRTC and all funding programs for their consideration. Cogeco would include this in their application for our Township to further demonstrate why the funding programs should consider all applications for our area as a priority. Cogeco thanks the Mayor and Clerk Administrator for our assistance and support over the past months as they strive to obtain funding to expand their network in our area and connect as many of our residents as possible. Covid-19 has provided extreme challenges for our Township and residents in many ways, and especially considering internet capabilities. Letter to be sent. Supported. Letter sent May 14, 2020.

Mar 9, 2020: Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation; Almaguin North Parry Sound Broadband Project Update

Blue Sky Net issued an RFP and a vendor has been selected, intention now is to submit an application to the CRTC Broadband Fund. Working with Spectrum Telecom Group Ltd the project deals with the upgrade of broadband infrastructure within un-served and underserved areas identified in the Almaguin and North Parry Sound (13 municipalities and First Nations). This proposal is a deployment of enhanced wireless networking equipment (for service distribution and backhaul) on 12 new and 14 existing Spectrum Group towers, 2 relatively small fibre builds are included in this project and their primary function will be to expand backhaul capabilities and help to open the bottleneck to the various wireless nodes located in the southern portion of the existing Almaguin Highlands wireless network. ACED (Almaguin Community Economic Development) Director of Economic Development encourages all municipalities to strongly consider support. Supported.

53-20 Scarlett, McLaren

WHEREAS, reliable, high speed, affordable access to the Internet and e-connectivity is imperative for our residents, businesses, non-profit organizations and visitors; and

WHEREAS, internet and e-connectivity are changing how humans interact with each other and with the world at large, as well as being a driving force for the current and future economy; and

WHEREAS, internet and e-connectivity create opportunity for increased innovation for consumers, businesses, agriculture, government; education, social and health development and

WHEREAS, municipalities that prioritize and provide access to advanced internet infrastructure such as fibre, are surpassing those that do not in terms of social, economic, and knowledge development; and

WHEREAS, we must plan and prioritize for the deployment and adoption of this infrastructure including but not limited to pursuing collaborations and partnerships in the efforts to effectively achieve greater access to affordable high-speed internet throughout the region, and

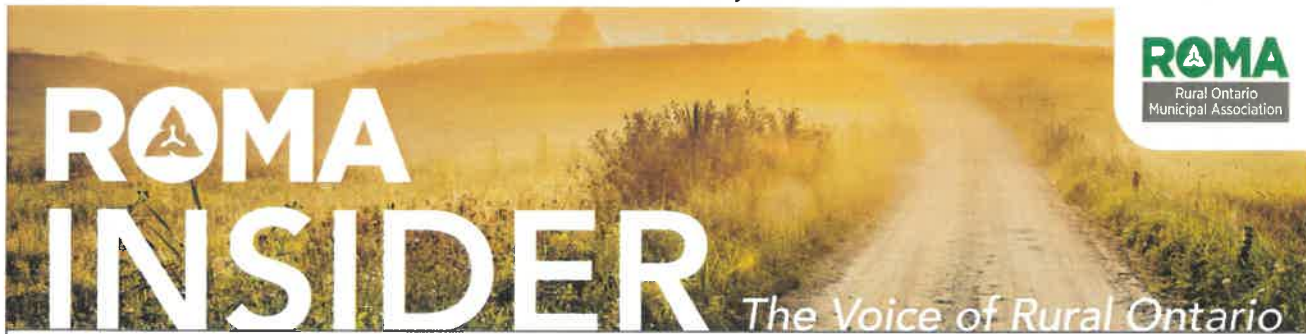
WHEREAS, much of the Township of Machar does not have access to greater than 5Mbps internet service, which is well below the CRTC standard of 50/10 Mbps, and

WHEREAS, the Municipal Council of the Township of Machar acknowledges that access to the internet and e-connectivity is a crucial part of our community mission to promote public safety, health, well-being and prosperity in order to improve the quality of life for present and future generations,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we support Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation's application to all government Broadband funding programs that will seek to provide funding to Spectrum Telecom Group Ltd to build a fibre and wireless access project in the region of Almaguin and North Parry Sound.

E.&O.E.

ROMA Insider - May 2020

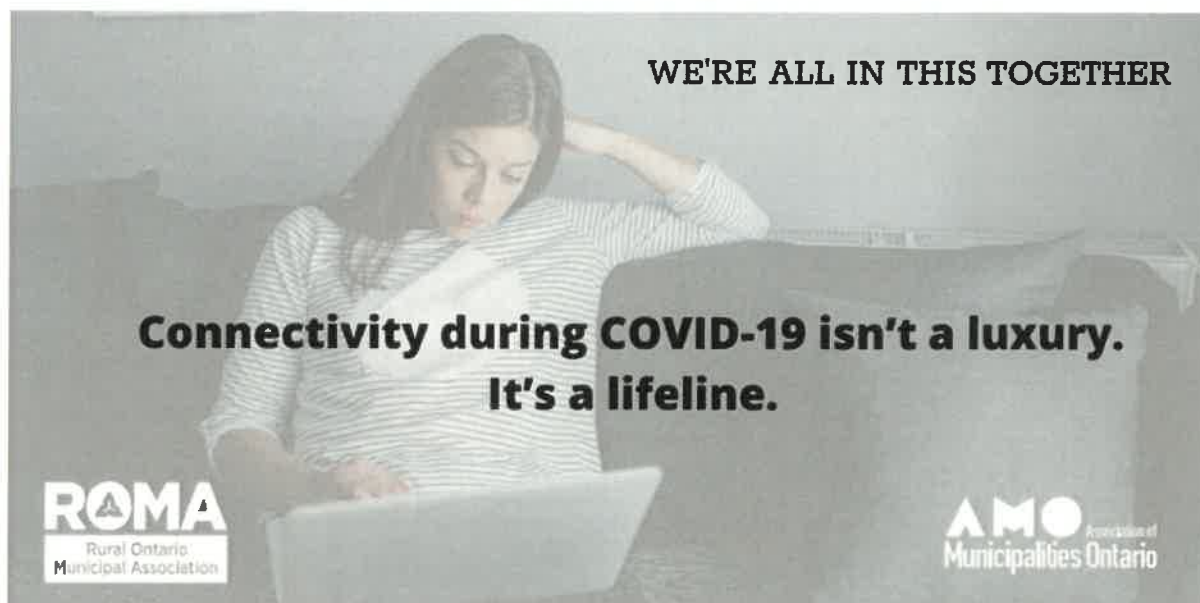


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Pandemic Highlights Digital Divide



The gap in rural internet connectivity - and its impact on people and businesses - has been highlighted by the pandemic, which has moved work, school and social lives online.






While there are no quick fixes, ROMA and AMO are advocating on two fronts. In the short-term, a joint letter was sent to national telecommunications firms seeking temporary solutions, such as offering low-cost Mobile Internet Sticks (USBs) at a reduced rate or setting up temporary wireless hotspots for rural residents. Overall, feedback was positive, with each telco responding with

their own efforts to address the challenge. They also recognize limits to existing networks, which has opened the door for further conversation.

A private sector role will be important as ROMA and AMO also continue to advocate for long-term solutions. The federal and provincial government commitments to date are encouraging. This funding should be expedited. All stakeholders will need to work together to find innovative solutions. As planning for the economic recovery unfolds, broadband connectivity across all of Ontario will be key to the province's future. Read more about [municipal advocacy for broadband](#).

BROADBAND AND CELLULAR CONNECTIVITY

LINKS

-  [AMO's Principles of Connectivity](#)
-  [Best Practices for Program Funding Design](#)
-  [AMO Submission on the Federal Universal Broadband Fund](#)
-  [ROMA Submission on the Federal Universal Broadband Fund](#)
-  [ROMA Comments on Broadcasting Telecomms Legislative Review Panel](#)

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Municipal governments across Ontario recognize the importance of fast, reliable and affordable broadband and cellular connectivity. Broadband and cellular networks are essential for our residents and businesses to prosper. Connectivity has become the linchpin for all communities, and it is time that this infrastructure be considered as important as roads and bridges are to our economy and quality of life.

Gaps in cellular and internet services can be found throughout Ontario's rural, northern, and remote areas. Some urban communities also face gaps, depending on the location. These service gaps are more evident with the COVID-19 emergency, which has moved education and non-essential businesses to remote and online delivery, combined with the need for immediate remote healthcare.

While there are no immediate solutions available, there are opportunities to address challenges through partnership. All parties need to be at the table. For some time, AMO has advocated for investments in connectivity by both the provincial and federal governments and telecommunications providers.

Working jointly with groups such as the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), AMO has emphasized that reliable connectivity is critical for business continuity, to retain residents (including youth) and to create livable communities.

Ontario's varied geography and population densities compound the imbalance. For example, while 35 municipal governments serve populations over 100,000, 270 have less than 10,000 residents. There are seven million people concentrated in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, compared to about one million people living across the vast reaches of Northern Ontario.

Regardless of the municipality's size, municipal governments are the closest service providers to Canadians, and it is our council members that hear the connectivity challenges and needs directly from residents and businesses.

Provincial and Federal Government Commitments to Date

AMO has been encouraged by the following commitments made at the higher levels of government, and think they are good first steps to recognize that connectivity is not a luxury - it's a social, cultural and economic lifeline that all residents deserve to access at an affordable cost:

THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

AMO supports these investments to fill connectivity gaps in Ontario. It's important that the funding programs be implemented quickly so that our communities do not fall further behind.

Private Sector Investment is Critical to Success

Of course, governments cannot be the sole investors in the system. While municipal governments understand that permanent connectivity solutions will take time and vary for every community, AMO has advocated for some practical steps our telecommunications providers could take to help underserved residents connect in the interim. These actions include, but are not limited to:

- providing low-cost Mobile Internet Sticks (USBs) to purchase at a reduced rate; and,
- setting up wireless hotspots for residents who require Internet connectivity to be productive and stay up to date on the most important information.

AMO and ROMA recently reached out to major telecommunications industry players in a spirit of collaboration to suggest these ideas to help our most challenged communities as residents connect quickly in this time of emergency. We know also that several providers have taken other actions to help their customers and communities during the current state of emergency.

The Way Forward

AMO continues to work with other stakeholders to advance access to broadband and cellular connectivity in all of our communities, as it is one of our biggest priorities - particularly given the state of emergency surrounding COVID-19. Stakeholders include other levels of government, affiliated associations, as well as private for-profit telecommunication companies, and their affiliated associations as well.

We are all in this together. Broadband and cellular connectivity have become the basic building blocks of a modern, resilient economy and society. While it is no small task, the rewards will be worth it to make a stronger Ontario and Canada.

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