

Broadband Access Programs:

Enhancing Connectivity in Rural & Remote Ontario

What is Broadband?

Broadband connectivity, also known as high-speed internet, combines telecommunications infrastructure and service, allowing end-users to access the internet at speeds far greater than traditional dial-up service allows. Broadband service is defined as a minimum download speed of 1.5 Megabits per second (Mbps).

Why is Broadband access important?

The Government of Ontario is committed to building strong, sustainable rural and northern communities. This commitment involves working to ensure that Ontario has the best possible communications infrastructure in place to support bringing broadband access to rural and remote areas of the province. Ontarians with access to broadband internet service also have enhanced access to e-education and skills training, e-health and e-government services. As well, broadband connectivity enables small and medium-sized businesses and home-based businesses to locate in rural and northern communities while maintaining an active presence in the global marketplace and at the same time becoming more productive, innovative and competitive.

A Catalyst for
Prosperous
Rural
Economies

What is being done to increase access?

Since 2007, the Ontario Government has committed over \$27.4 million to 47 broadband projects in rural southern Ontario through two **Rural Connections** initiatives. The majority of this funding goes to infrastructure costs, while the balance will promote the use of the new service by residents, businesses and the community. Municipalities, telecommunications providers and other private partners will contribute the balance of project costs. All projects must be complete by March 31, 2012.

Another provincial initiative is **Building Broadband in Rural and Northern Ontario**, a co-investment program with the federal government's **Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians**. The province will contribute up to \$32.75 million to top-up federally approved projects in Ontario. Eligible applicants are private and not-for-profit sector internet service providers, municipalities and First Nation communities that can build and operate broadband networks. The application deadline was October 23, 2009, and announcements are expected this winter. All projects must complete by December 31, 2011.

Federal and provincial support for the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus Inc.'s Eastern Ontario Regional Network was announced on July 30, 2009. This high speed internet project is estimated to cost \$170 million, and the province has set aside up to \$55 million to match its one-third share with the federal government. This project will bring broadband to eastern Ontario through three components: satellite, fibre backbone and last mile access.

These programs are jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Government Services, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry as the funding component of Ontario's broadband strategy.

Broadband
Infrastructure
Funding in
Ontario

Ontarians comment on Broadband access:

“High speed internet has opened up a whole new world of services available to clients of our horse breeding operation. We can now provide videos and high quality photos in a timely manner. As an added bonus, we can update our Website in minutes instead of hours.”

“I am a graphic designer and often work from my country home. Upload and download speeds were atrocious when dealing with large files. I’m happy to say that I can now upload and download those files, and listen to streaming radio! It has made a huge difference in my work day.”

“It was necessary to telecommute to my corporate job, due to a significant health issue. Using dialup added hours to every work day. When secure high speed internet was installed, I was able to access my company’s shared files, and extend my work into countries around the world.”

“I was dismayed to learn that I couldn’t take my Master’s degree online because it required high speed access. Now I can apply for the program, view content, see virtual ‘museums’, and see a world that was hidden to me.”

Where can I find more information?

Building Broadband in Rural and Northern Ontario website

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/bbrno/index.htm

Rural Connections website

www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/ruralconnections/broadband.htm

Industry Canada website

www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/719.nsf/eng/h_00001.html

Digital Ontario website

www.digitalontario.mgs.gov.on.ca

Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus

www.eodigitalpossibilities.org

www.cowc.org

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

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