

## NEWS

# Arnott fights for better Internet access

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott is welcoming news that the Federal and Provincial Governments are finally partnering to expand access to high-speed internet in southwestern Ontario.

On July 26, the Ontario Government announced that it is partnering with the Government of Canada to expand access to broadband internet in southwestern Ontario by delivering fibre optic coverage to over 300 communities. Both the Ontario and the Federal Governments have promised to provide \$90 million toward the project, which is a part of the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) project.

This is welcome news, Arnott said. Lack of access to high-speed internet in some parts of rural Ontario is holding us back.

The veteran Progressive Conservative MPP has been advocating for the expansion of access to high-speed internet for some time. In July 2014, he tabled a Private Member's Resolution in the Ontario Legislature calling on the Government to develop a strategy to ensure that all Ontarians have access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet. The resolution called on the Government to work with the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus and the Federal Government to achieve this goal through the development of public/private partnerships. It was tabled on the very first day the House resumed following the June 2014 provincial election and is still one of the first items on the Legislature's Order Paper.

I'm glad to see that the Government finally appears to be listening to what we've been saying, Arnott said.

He pointed out that expanding access to high-speed internet in rural Ontario will have significant economic benefits.

Access to reliable and affordable

high-speed internet is essential in today's economy, Arnott argued. It would help our local businesses grow and attract new investment in our rural communities.

While Arnott is hopeful that this is a positive step forward, he noted that the announcement is short on details.

Unfortunately, the Government's news release did not indicate a firm time frame for the actual launch of the improved internet service or a complete list of the communities which would benefit from it, Arnott said. I hope to raise this issue in the Legislature when it resumes sitting in September.

Last month, council passed a motion to encourage the government in expanding better Internet access. Moved by the Mayor Rick Bonnette and seconded by Councillor Brown, the motion says that the town supports the Federation of Canadian Municipalities position that working in partnership with the municipal sector, the federal government should:

- Play a leadership role in developing the telecommunications infrastructure that is critical to the social, cultural and economic life of Canada's rural, northern and remote communities,
- Adopt a comprehensive and long-term funding mechanism for basic broadband access, and the existing arrangement for basic telecommunications services is a good starting point,
- Update the basic service objective to include universal access to affordable high-speed broadband Internet at speeds that reflect present realities and guarantee long-term, reliable connectivity,
- Continually re-evaluate its broadband speed targets to reflect technological advancements, changes in user needs, traffic, and network capacity.



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