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SWIFT initiative receives funding approval from federal and provincial governments

Orangeville/ July 27, 2016 – Dufferin County residents are one step closer to receiving improved access to ultra-high speed broadband internet connectivity. County of Dufferin Warden Laura Ryan attended a funding announcement in London, Ontario yesterday where the governments of Canada and Ontario jointly committed \$180 million to support the development of the Southwestern Ontario Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) Network project. Canada and Ontario will each provide up to \$90 million towards the total project cost of approximately \$281 million. The County of Dufferin committed \$536,000 between 2015-2019.

The SWIFT project was created by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC), a not-for-profit organization representing 15 upper and single tier municipalities in Southwestern Ontario. Dufferin County Warden Laura Ryan is a member of the Caucus and Dufferin County CAO Sonya Pritchard serves as the Lead CAO for the project and is the Treasurer of the SWIFT Board.

"I am very pleased that the federal and provincial government have committed to this project and to helping rural residents and businesses gain better access to the internet and digital economy," said Warden Laura Ryan. The SWIFT Initiative is based on the principle that everyone in South Western Ontario deserves access to high-speed Internet, regardless of the size of their community, their age, education, or where they work.

SWIFT understands that the market alone is not meeting the need for improved connectivity and growing bandwidth demands in Southwestern Ontario. SWIFT will build an affordable, open-access, ultra-high-speed fibre-optic regional broadband network that connects the entire region with service ranging from 1 Gbps up to 100 Gbps, using a combination of public and private funding. Here's how it works:

- SWIFT will build on existing fibre to create a far-reaching regional fibre network. The project will leverage government and broader public sector organization (i.e., schools and healthcare centres) to serve as anchor tenants of the network. This strategy will bring fibre closer to customers and will make it easier for independent service providers (ISPs) to connect homes and businesses to ultra-high-speed internet
- SWIFT will direct funding – from municipal, provincial and federal governments - to address gaps in broadband infrastructure that are leaving some communities behind. The new funding will trigger private investment from ISPs, who will continue to own and operate their networks and deliver services directly to customers
- All ISPs will have equal access to the fibre network, leveling the playing field and creating a more competitive marketplace. That will better serve urban and rural communities

In addition to the member municipalities of the WOWC, the Region of Niagara, Town of Caledon and City of Orillia are also supporting the SWIFT project. SWIFT has also received support from the Southern First Nations Secretariat, school boards, colleges, universities and health care organizations.

To view the full federal and provincial government announcement and funding details, please visit <https://news.ontario.ca/moi/en/2016/7/ultra-high-speed-internet-coming-to-300-communities-in-southwestern-ontario.html>

With federal and provincial funding now in place, the SWIFT project will begin in 2016 with a target of completing the construction and connecting communities over the next 5 years. For more information about the SWIFT project, visit www.swiftnetwork.ca.

The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Inc. (WOWC) is a not-for-profit organization representing 15 upper and single tier municipalities in Southwestern Ontario with more than three million residents. Its purpose is to enhance the prosperity and overall wellbeing of rural and small urban communities across the region. Caucus members work collectively to influence federal, provincial and municipal legislative, regulatory and program initiatives through advocacy, research and analysis and education.

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