

Backgrounder

Improving cell service across eastern Ontario

EORN partners with Rogers Communications

The Eastern Ontario Regional Network is spearheading a public-private partnership with Rogers Communications to improve cell service across the region.

Valued at more than \$300 million, the project will involve construction of more than 300 new telecommunications sites and the upgrade of more than 300 existing sites over the next four to five years. Work is to be completed by 2025, with new services activated as groups of towers are completed. Construction plans are still being finalized.

Funding

- Both the federal and provincial governments have committed \$71 million each.
- All municipal members of the EOWC and most of the EOMC have committed to the \$10 million municipal share of funding.
- Rogers Communications' investments bring the total value of the project to more than \$300 million. Rogers was selected through a competitive bidding process.

The cell gap

EORN conducted four different studies to assess cellular/mobile broadband needs across the region and the potential impact of improvements. There are currently significant gaps in both the reach and capacity of mobile broadband networks across areas of eastern Ontario where people live, work or travel:

- 40 per cent of the area does not have access to high-definition services that allow streaming high-definition (HD) video.
- 20 per cent of the area does not have access to standard definition (SD) video, typical mobile app use and video app calling.
- 10 per cent has no voice calling service.

Goals

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has designated both mobile and fixed broadband as basic services for all Canadians. The project is designed to improve cell coverage across the area where people live, work and travel. It aims to provide:

- 99 per cent of the area with voice calling services.
- At least 95 per cent of the area with standard-definition level services, such as video-app calls, basic app usage and streaming of SD video.
- At least 85 per cent of the area with service levels that can support streaming high-definition video and more data-intensive apps.

Additional investments will increase capacity of networks in high density, high usage areas.

Impact

The project has the potential to:

- Create more than 3,000 full-time equivalent jobs and spur \$420 million in new business revenue over 10 years.
- Improve safety so people aren't left stranded with “no signal.”
- Provide greater choice to residents in areas where traditional broadband is not available.
- Ready the region for the next evolution of technology.

Technology

- Through the project, Rogers will be expanding Canada's largest and most reliable 5G service into eastern Ontario.ⁱ
- Powered by Ericsson, this latest generation in wireless network technology over time will deliver unprecedented speed, instant response times, and fast, reliable connections that transform how we live and work. It significantly increases access to near instantaneous data sharing that can support applications that are transforming sectors like agriculture and transportation.
- Building a safe, reliable and high-quality network is EORN's top priority. Rogers is regulated by Canada's Ministry of Industry Science and Economic Development, and all products and services offered by Rogers are in compliance with Health Canada's rigorous safety standards.

Quotes

“It's very exciting for us to know that eastern Ontario is now going to have the ability to be more productive in all areas. If we can do what we can do now, can you imagine what we can accomplish when we've got reliability, we've got the speed behind us? We can all be

connected, implement automation and robotics, have a better skilled workforce. We're ready, we're absolutely ready."

- *Darla Price, Managing Editor with the Northumberland Manufacturers' Association*

"It's just part of your life now. Technology, even in the dairy industry, has changed. You can do precision planting, precision fertilizing and precision spraying, which is important to the environment and to your pocketbook."

- *Cynthia Crowley, Owner, Crovalley Holsteins.*

"Almost everything we do now is digital. When we get improved cell coverage, and in our area cell coverage also means internet in most cases, we waste way less time just transferring files from our desk at our office to where they need to go, or receiving those files. It'll be way easier to attract young talent. We'd be able to give people the flexibility to work from home one or two days a week, or when it makes sense to do so."

- *Scott MacGregor, Founder and Publisher, Rapid Media*

"Cell service is extremely important for us. We're dealing with life and death situations every day. Paramedics are making critical decisions every moment. We use cell coverage not only for phone and our ability to connect with other health care providers, but we also do a lot of telemedicine, remote patient monitoring."

- *Doug Socha, Chief Paramedic and Director of Emergency Services at Hastings - Quinte Paramedic Services*

About eastern Ontario

The EORN initiative applies to a geographic area of nearly 50,000 square kilometres that includes 13 members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (11 regional county municipalities and two single-tier municipalities), and nine separated municipalities who are members of the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus. EORN is also consulting with the region's Indigenous communities and organizations regarding involvement in the project.

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus includes:

- County of Frontenac
- County of Haliburton
- County of Hastings
- City of Kawartha Lakes (single tier)
- County of Lanark
- United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
- County of Lennox and Addington
- County of Northumberland
- County of Peterborough
- United Counties of Prescott and Russell
- Prince Edward County (single tier)
- County of Renfrew

- United Counties of Stormont,
Dundas and Glengarry

The nine separated municipalities participating in the project are:

- Kingston
- Belleville
- Quinte West
- Smiths Falls
- Gananoque
- Prescott
- City of Peterborough
- Pembroke
- Cornwall

For more information

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¹ Rogers was ranked first in the umlaut Mobile Data Performance audit in major Canadian cities in Q4, 2020. Visit www.umlaut.com/en/benchmarking/canada. Largest based on total square kilometers of Rogers 5G coverage compared to published coverage of other national networks.