

## Rural Broadband Funding Request for Southwestern Ontario

### Issue

Increased funding from both the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada is urgently needed to address our region's large connectivity gaps, so that we can close the digital divide and restart our economies.

### Background

The Government of Canada, via the CRTC, has committed to bring 50/10 broadband service (the Universal Service Objective or USO) to 90% of Canadians in 2021, 95% in 2026 and 100% by 2030. In order to reduce the digital divide within the region, and to achieve the CRTC's 95% target by 2026, it will cost an estimated \$1B.

### WOWC Position

We support Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) as Southwestern Ontario's funding mechanism to advance the expansion of critical broadband infrastructure across the region.

### Required Action:

The WOWC is requesting direct funding from the Government of Canada in the amount of \$254M and from the Government of Ontario in the amount of \$221M to support the expansion of critical broadband infrastructure within the region.

In addition, the WOWC is also requesting that the CRTC Broadband Fund and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) Universal Broadband Fund each allocate 10% of their funds directly to Southwestern Ontario (based on population share of total for Canada).

Combined with a \$68.4M commitment from the region and a \$105M contribution from the private sector (ISPs), we intend to successfully address the \$1B Southwestern Ontario infrastructure deficit and achieving the interim goal of providing 50/10 broadband services to 95% of the population within the region by 2025.

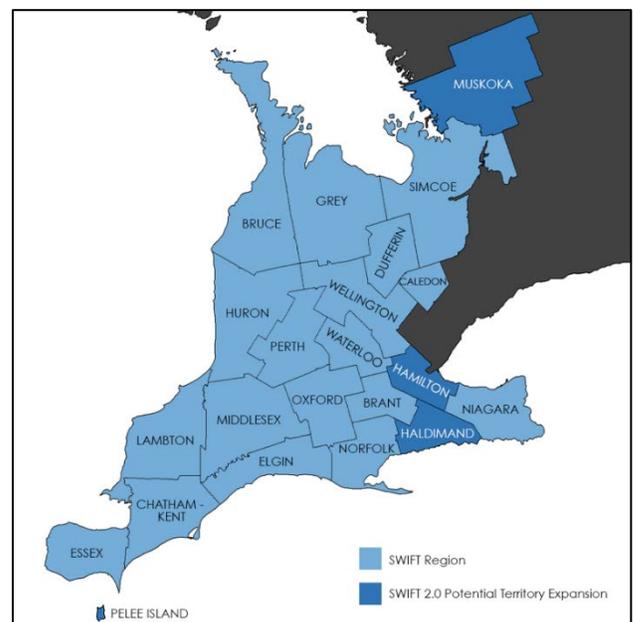


Figure 1 -Potential SWIFT 2.0 Territory, represents 10% of the population of Canada

## Key Points

- To reduce the digital divide within Southwestern Ontario, and to achieve the CRTC's 95% target by 2026, it will cost an estimated \$1B. The WOWC and the participating SWIFT municipalities are requesting direct funding to the SWIFT 2.0 program from the Government of Canada in the amount of \$254M and from the Government of Ontario in the amount of \$221M.
- The WOWC and participating municipalities are requesting that the CRTC Broadband Fund and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) Universal Broadband Fund each allocate 10% of their funds directly to Southwestern Ontario (based on population share of total for Canada).
- Southwestern Ontario represents 10% of the population of Canada
- Southwestern Ontario also has a high proportion of employer businesses, representing 20% of the total number of businesses in Canada (*Source: Statistics Canada, Business Register, December 2015. Canadian Business Patterns 2015*). Now more than ever businesses need connectivity to ensure a livelihood for themselves and their employees.
- As elementary, secondary and post secondary institutions, continue to shift to online learning, many students living in Southwestern Ontario will be at a disadvantage due to lack of quality internet connection. Without direct broadband funding the pre-existing Southwestern Ontario "homework gap" will be exacerbated and lead to an unparallel inequality in education.