



Sent by email to: Dan.ruimy@parl.gc.ca

August 8, 2017

MP Dan Ruimy
Chair, Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology
House of Commons
Room 565
180 Wellington
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Ruimy:

On behalf of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), I am pleased to present you with ROMA's submission to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology's call for briefs on broadband connectivity in rural Canada.

ROMA has long advocated for increased access to fast, reliable and affordable broadband services in rural regions comparable to that of Canadian urban centers. Access to these services will ensure that students can conduct research, complete their assignments and receive an education on par with that of their urban peers. It will contribute to the viability and success of startups and other rural businesses, which must stay interconnected with the digitized global economy in order to innovate and grow. Access to high-speed broadband services is also important to combat rural isolation, to ensure the efficient delivery of social services and so that rural families and communities can remain in their homes instead of leaving for more urbanized centers to live and work. For these reasons and more, I am pleased to see the Standing Committee address this important issue, as access to broadband connectivity is of critical importance for the continued prosperity and development of rural Ontario and Canada.

I now turn to your questions, answered below.

a) What constitutes acceptable high-speed service?

ROMA has advocated for years that rural Ontario have access to broadband services on par with those available in urban centers. Our students and our businesses will not be able to compete in the global economy without access to the interconnectivity necessary to thrive in a highly digitized world. Broadband speeds must also be continuously reevaluated to ensure they remain reflective of the latest technological

developments.

b) The financial challenges of implementing high-speed service?

ROMA recognizes that there are financial challenges to implementing high-speed service across Canada. Telecom providers have historically prioritized dense urban areas when expanding broadband connectivity since rural regions present a smaller customer base and a slower return on investment for these for-profit providers. Further, broadband infrastructure investment is necessary to increase internet access in rural communities, which may be located in remote, hard to reach regions. However, these financial obstacles must be weighed against the detrimental economic and social costs to rural communities that are unable to connect to the internet.

c) Regulatory changes to encourage the implementation of high-speed service?

Government should incentivize telecom providers to invest in rural broadband connectivity, and barriers to these investments must be eliminated. It is also time for the Federal government to more effectively intervene and provide resources to ensure high-speed broadband access becomes a reality for rural Ontario and across rural Canada. These objectives can be realized if high-speed broadband access is viewed as an essential service and if innovative solutions to the issue are sought after and implemented.

I appreciate your consideration of ROMA's submission to the Standing Committee. Should you have any questions, you may contact Cathie Brown, Senior Advisor, at cathiebrown@amo.on.ca or at 416.971.9856 Ext 342.

We look forward to continued collaboration with the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology to address this important issue.

Sincerely,



Ron Holman
ROMA Chair

cc: Danielle Widmer, Clerk of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology
The Honourable Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs