

Government helping to bring high-speed internet to Town of Caledon

By Rob Paul

As part of the Government of Ontario's plan to connect every community to high-speed internet by 2025, more than 950 homes, farms, and businesses in the Town of Caledon and Dufferin County are now receiving high-speed internet service, thanks to two newly completed broadband infrastructure networks in the Region.

The completion of these projects, totalling \$5 million, is helping to ensure that farms and businesses in Albion, Humber Grove, Garafraxa Woods, and between the villages of Blackhorse and Coventry, have the ability to attract new customers, grow their business, create new jobs, and stay competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace.

With the added context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's also helping people in these communities work, access services like health care or renewing their driver's licenses, shop online, and stay in touch with family and friends in faster ways than before.

"Our government is proud to partner with Ontario to improve internet connectivity in rural communities across Southwestern Ontario," said Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure, and Communities. "Broadband infrastructure connects Canadians to essential services and learning and business opportunities that enable them to succeed."

The expanded fibre-optic service is supported by the governments of Canada and Ontario, each committing up to \$1.3 million. The contract to expand broadband services were awarded by Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) Inc., a not-for-profit corporation, initiated by local municipalities to address connectivity in Southwestern Ontario.

"Our government made access to high-speed internet a major priority for rural Ontario and we are delivering on that commitment," said Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. "The pandemic really showed us the importance of being connected to high-speed broadband. Families and businesses in these communities and throughout rural Ontario need these services to do their work—whether it's schoolwork or running a business. This is the type of critical infrastructure that benefits the entire community."

In addition, construction is underway to further expand broadband access in the two regions. The governments of Canada and Ontario are each committing \$1.79 million to support a new infrastructure network that will connect nearly 1,000 homes, farms, and businesses in the communities of the Grange, Laurel, and Camilla to reliable high-speed internet services starting in February 2022.

"At a time when more families and businesses are depending on access to the internet, I am pleased to see SWIFT projects being completed and other projects getting started in Dufferin," said Sylvia Jones, MPP Dufferin-Caledon. "It's essential that we support families and businesses who rely on the internet by ensuring they have access to reliable broadband."

More than \$255 million has been invested by the government of Canada and Ontario and the private sector, to bring high-speed internet to more than 58,000 households and businesses in Southwestern Ontario through SWIFT.

"Increasing access to fast, reliable high-speed internet service throughout our small and rural underserved communities is key to driving social and economic growth throughout Southwestern Ontario," said Gary McNamara, SWIFT Board Chair. "In partnership with the government of Ontario and Canada we are pleased to be working together to expand broadband services throughout Dufferin County and within the Town of Caledon to provide many more residents with equal opportunities to connect, work from home, study and participate in today's ever growing digital society."