

Town of Caledon launches petition calling for improved high-speed internet

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

The on-going concerns over a lack of high-speed internet options in the rural areas of Caledon has forced the Town of Caledon to launch an online petition lobbying for improved services.

The municipality moved forward with the petition earlier this month to declare broadband service an essential service within the municipality. The petition is to motivate both Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seeback and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones to support the declaration and to 'help facilitate telecommunication access to existing infrastructure, including underutilized or dark fibre optic network and hydro poles in support of affordable and reliable broadband expansion in all communities'.

The situation has only been exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many locals forced to work from home, and students expected to learn online, despite having inadequate internet resources.

According to the petition, 'Most businesses including agriculture, require high-speed internet to operate, and it has become a key component of economic development. Current and future residents expect to have access to high speed internet for both personal and professional endeavours. Much of the school curriculum has become dependent on students having access to internet and a computer at home.'

MP Kyle Seeback has been fighting for better internet in rural areas in his riding since being elected last year. Mr. Seeback states on his website that residents have shared their concerns and complaints about the lack of high-speed and limited access in the Dufferin and Caledon areas.

'Almost all the government funds are accessed by the large telecoms. And by doing that, you drive out the smaller internet service providers from their ability to compete and to also provide broadband services in rural communities,' he said in an interview with the Citizen last week. 'We have to redesign those programs really for the benefit of smaller and regional internet service providers, because they're the ones that are actually trying to expand their services across rural municipalities.'

The Town of Caledon is asking for the help of the community to sign their petition to allow their voices to be heard to find a solution to this ongoing issue.

Over the past couple months there have been small fillers to the gaps, including on June 2, where Caledon took a step forward through an RFP that was issued to improve Caledon's internet infrastructure, worth over \$5 million. The proposal was issued by Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology Inc. (SWIFT).

'We have long advocated that this is an essential service and now the pandemic has underscored it,' said Mayor Allan Thompson. 'I'm thrilled that our dream of Town-wide access to affordable, reliable high speed is that much closer to reality. I want to thank our provincial and federal governments, our SWIFT partners and Members of Council for all their support.'

But it hasn't been enough.

The Town is hoping that residents will come together and sign the petition to make high-speed internet access an essential service for our community.

'This pandemic has shown us access to affordable high-speed internet service is more important than ever and there are still many areas of Caledon that are under served. The Town of Caledon has added more public Wi-Fi and partnered with providers such as Vianet to boost infrastructure, but more needs to be done,' said Mayor Allan Thompson on his Facebook page. 'We need our federal and provincial governments to declare broadband internet an essential service.'

To learn more, please visit [Caledon.ca](#).