

WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL Chamber of Commerce

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Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce Calls on Provincial Government to Push Broadband Strategy into High Speed

Windsor, ON – Today, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has called on Premier Kathleen Wynne to commit dedicated provincial infrastructure funds to developing and expanding broadband internet access in remote and rural areas of the province.

“Access to high speed internet is also essential for Windsor-Essex businesses to compete in the 21st century global economy,” said Matt Marchand, Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce (WERCC) President & CEO. “It is critical that all regions across Ontario, especially rural areas, have access to this essential infrastructure.”

While the WERCC and the OCC acknowledge broadband investments made by the Government of Canada in the recent federal budget, internet access continues to be an issue in parts of Ontario. The letter to the Premier identifies three key recommendations that the Ontario government should address in the coming term to ensure all communities in the province are able to compete in the global economy:

1. Develop a robust broadband investment strategy that acknowledges that broadband is an essential infrastructure investment, and creates space for continued private-sector investment.
2. Build partnerships across all levels of government in order to leverage funding and respond to local need. Recognizing that the private sector has driven investment in broadband infrastructure, the OCC recommends an intergovernmental funds matching formula that will continue to incentivize large private sector investments.
3. Benchmark Ontario’s internet speeds and access. In order to ensure Ontario is able to compete in a technology-driven global economy, we need to create broadband infrastructure that is equal with those of other globally-competitive jurisdictions.

In April 2016, the WERCC along with the Ontario Chamber Network called on the federal government to address broadband access and quality. “This is not just a rural or remote issue. Suburban companies report similar issues with connectivity. The WERCC would like to see broadband infrastructure, something that Warden Tom Bain of Essex County has been advocating for through SWIFT (Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology), be realized sooner rather than later as it plays a vital role in economic development for our colleagues in the county,” said Marchand.

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With government services increasingly shifting to online platforms, universal access to high speed internet is becoming more important than ever. By working with the Windsor-Essex community and the Ontario business community, government can develop broadband policy that is responsive to existing needs while not dissuading private sector investment.

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