

**Wayne Emmerson**  
Chairman and CEO



**ATTACHMENT 3**  
The Regional Municipality of York  
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Friday August 21, 2020

The Hon. Laurie Scott  
Minister of Infrastructure  
777 Bay Street – 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3  
Laurie.scott@pc.ola.org

Dear Minister Scott:

**RE: YorkNet application for Stage 1 Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON) program**

On behalf of York Regional Council and The Regional Municipality of York, we are sharing with you our support of YorkNet's Stage 1 application of the *Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON)* program.

With the support and commitment of York Regional Council, York Region continues to take steps to improve access to high speed broadband in our communities. Through our own dark fibre network operated and managed by YorkNet, we are building an affordable, reliable and sustainable network across York Region.

Many areas of York Region, in particular in the northern municipalities of Georgina, East Gwillimbury, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville, are digitally divided from the rest of the Region. Approximately 70% of the homes in these areas are still underserved. High-speed internet access is not always available at appropriate speeds or affordable prices, particularly in these rural communities. **The attached National Broadband Internet Service Availability map highlights this divide in York Region.**

This digital divide is driving the impassioned plea to improve connectivity in York Region. We hear from our citizens, businesses and communities the digital divide in York Region creates unacceptable barriers. In light of the growing demands COVID-19 has placed, in particular on our agricultural and rural communities, the need for reliable and consistent broadband services is needed now more than ever.

As outlined by the [Canadian Internet Registration Authority](#) (CIRA), a not-for-profit organization best known for managing the .CA internet domain name on behalf of all Canadians, a growing disparity between rural and urban internet performance has been highlighted even more so since the pandemic.

- In July, median rural download speeds were measured at 5.62 Mbps, compared to 51.54 Mbps in urban Canada – a difference of approximately 10 times
- Since the pandemic began, median download speeds have plateaued for rural areas while urban download speeds have nearly doubled (51.54 Mbps in July versus 26.16 Mbps in March)

Through YorkNet we are primed to better connect our underserved communities but we cannot achieve this without the support of senior levels of government. Funding through the **Improving Connectivity in Ontario (ICON) program** will allow for the rapid expansion of our dark fibre network – using our proven business model at a time our citizens need connectivity the most. Our fibre backbone will be built in partnership with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that will provide the ability to connect homes and businesses through a last mile network.

Should YorkNet's application proceed, it will be brought to Regional Council for a resolution of support in Stage 2.

Connectivity has become the cornerstone for our economy, health care and education and is vital to online learning. Investing in backbone dark fibre enables reliable and consistent connectivity to start to bridge York Region's digital divide and ensure more equitable access for all.

On behalf of York Region and our more than 1.2 million residents who rely on broadband as an essential service, we thank you for your consideration in providing us with the financial support to help enable the enhancement of this vital infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Wayne Emmerson  
York Region Chairman and CEO



Mayor Tom Mrakas  
Town of Aurora



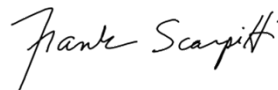
Mayor Virginia Hackson  
Town of East Gwillimbury



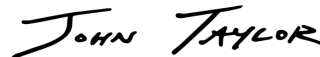
Mayor Margaret Quirk  
Town of Georgina



Mayor Steve Pellegrini  
Township of King



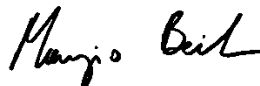
Mayor Frank Scarpitti  
City of Markham



Mayor John Taylor  
Town of Newmarket



Mayor Dave Barrow  
City of Richmond Hill



Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua  
City of Vaughan



Mayor Iain Lovatt  
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville