

Connecting southern Ontario to high-speed internet with the Universal Broadband Fund

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The pandemic may have actually sparked a boost in internet service to rural Ontarians. And it can't come soon enough for King residents. Over the past months, many Canadians have worked from home, taken classes, shopped online, and accessed government services remotely. The global COVID-19 pandemic has made it more important than ever for all Canadians to access fast and reliable Internet, no matter where they live. King-Vaughan MP and Minister of Seniors, the Honourable Deb Schulte, highlighted an investment of \$1.75 billion to help connect Canadians to high-speed Internet across the country. Originally announced in Budget 2019 as a \$1 billion program, the government is now providing additional funding to advance large, high-impact projects, which will leverage partnerships including with the Canada Infrastructure Bank broadband initiative. The program will include a \$150 million Rapid Response Stream with an accelerated application process that will allow shovel-ready projects to get started right away. The UBF will also allocate \$50 million of its total budget for mobile Internet projects that primarily benefit Indigenous peoples. This investment will help connect 98 per cent of Canadians across the country to high-speed Internet by 2026 so that they can better participate in the digital economy. Minister Schulte also highlighted an agreement of \$600 million with Canadian satellite company Telesat to secure low-earth-orbit satellite capacity, which will improve connectivity and expand high-speed Internet coverage to rural and remote regions across Canada. These investments will help make progress on the government's commitment to create over one million jobs, and its work to support Canadians living in rural, remote, and northern communities. As we take steps toward our economic recovery from the pandemic, the federal government will continue to make investments in infrastructure to build strong communities and a more competitive and resilient Canada for everyone. The Government has already made significant progress toward the goal of connecting Canadians to high-speed internet. In southern Ontario, Ottawa has invested a total of \$174, 030,550 in 14 projects, which will connect 25,661 households. "We have listened to Canadians living in our rural and remote communities and are acting on their priorities. The Government of Canada is accelerating and increasing our investments to close the gap faced by rural and remote communities in access to high speed internet. The pandemic has highlighted how important this is, as we are all more dependent on fast, reliable connectivity. By ensuring all Canadians have access to high speed internet, we will help unlock economic and social opportunities across our country," Schulte said. The Universal Broadband Fund was announced in Budget 2019. It is part of a series of federal investments made to improve access to high-speed Internet, which are expected to connect nearly 400,000 additional households by the end of 2023. The Government of Canada has already made significant progress toward its goal of connecting all Canadians to high-speed Internet by 2030, by supporting projects and programs that will connect 1.2 million Canadian households over the next few years. The government will work with partners to provide all Canadians with at least 50 megabits per second download speeds and 10 megabits per second upload speeds, no matter where they are in the country. These speeds will allow Canadians to telework, participate in e-learning and access telehealth. Ottawa recently announced a \$2 billion broadband initiative as part of the Canada Infrastructure Bank's Growth Plan. This initiative will help connect approximately 750,000 homes and small businesses to broadband in underserved communities, so Canadians can better participate in the digital economy.