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## SWIFT Releases RFP to Bring High-Speed Internet to More Residents in Essex County

*The Essex County RFP was released March 9, 2020. Contracts will be awarded, and service provider agreements will be put in place shortly after the RFP closes on July 31, 2020.*

**Essex, ON** - June 17, 2020 - Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) is proud to announce that many more residents living in Essex County will soon have greater access to faster, reliable internet services. Today, the regional broadband project announced it has issued a **Request for Proposals (RFP)** for \$12.8 million to to expand broadband access in the County.

“Broadband has now become a necessary utility as essential activities such as work, education, shopping and accessing public services continue to move online,” says David Mayberry, SWIFT Board Chair. “Our current reality has emphasized, more so than ever, the importance and need for greater connectivity across our region. That is why SWIFT, in partnership with the Government of Ontario and Canada, along with our municipal partners are pleased to announce that access to high-speed internet will soon be a reality for many more residents living in Essex County.”

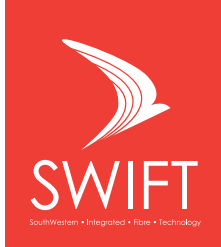
“We are thrilled with this announcement today, as the dedicated work of SWIFT is beginning to take shape in Essex County, ensuring residents and businesses will be provided access to fast and quality internet services. We know that broadband technology is integral to our region in order to attract investment, retain talent and create opportunities for economic prosperity. This RFP is the first step to crucial connectivity across the County and we look forward to future partnerships and successes,” says Essex County Warden Gary McNamara.

Prequalified service providers have until July 31, 2020 to submit network designs and proposals to address broadband service gaps in **eligible funding areas** throughout the County.

To identify high-quality projects, SWIFT will evaluate all eligible proposals against a predefined assessment criteria.

When evaluating and selecting projects for funding, SWIFT takes into consideration the following: ability to provide 50 Mbps down, 10 Mbps up (50/10) service or greater, number of premises passed, future scalability of the network, and service provider contribution proportion, among other project selection factors.

Selected and **approved projects** will be announced once SWIFT has completed its evaluation assessment, negotiated contracts and awarded funding to projects that score the highest based on the evaluation process.



“SWIFT, through its public and private partnerships, is advancing the expansion of high-speed networks across our region to close internet service gaps,” says Barry Field, Executive Director, SWIFT. “In the race to increase connectivity in our unserved and underserved communities, today’s announcement represents a significant step in bringing high-speed internet to many more residents living in Southwestern Ontario.”

Operating on a cost sharing basis, SWIFT will leverage federal and provincial funding to subsidize up to a maximum of 2/3 of the eligible costs for awarded projects to deliver reliable internet to more people living in Essex County.

For more information about SWIFT, please visit [www.swiftruralbroadband.ca](http://www.swiftruralbroadband.ca).

### **Quick Facts:**

- SWIFT is currently overseeing a \$209 million Southwestern Ontario broadband expansion plan that will connect 22% of the region’s underserved premises over the next 3 years.
- As part of its expansion plan, SWIFT has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for \$12.8 million to expand broadband infrastructure in Essex County. Contracts will be awarded and service provider agreements will be put in place shortly after the RFP closes on July 31, 2020.
- The Government of Ontario and Canada have committed up to \$63.7 million each to support SWIFT. The project also leverages additional funding from municipal partners and private sector investors.

### **About SWIFT:**

Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) is a non-profit regional broadband project initiated by the Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus to subsidize the construction of high-speed broadband networks across Southwestern Ontario.

The project was approved for funding under the New Building Canada Fund – Small Communities Fund (NBCF-SCF), a joint federal and provincial infrastructure funding program, and leverages additional funding from municipal partners and private sector investors to improve access to broadband services across the region.

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