



**Office Of The Reeve  
Township of The Archipelago**

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Ms. Kinga Surma  
Minister of Infrastructure  
Room 5E200, 5th Floor  
777 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 2J3

August 14, 2024

Dear Minister Surma,

It is with great interest that we provide a connectivity update from the perspective of the Township of The Archipelago and its community region, West Parry Sound. The Township applauds the provincial government for its \$4 billion investment and is appreciative of the Ministry of Infrastructure's leadership with the Accelerated High Speed Internet Program.

Improved connectivity to Ontario's unserved and underserved areas creates immense economic development opportunities and begins to address some of the challenges experienced by rural and remote communities. These communities continue to experience profound inequities in the areas of education, business, and interpersonal relationships due to the lack of adequate communications infrastructure. The buildout of new broadband infrastructure starts to work toward resolving this inequity.

The West Parry Sound region will see a nearly \$25 million provincial investment to accomplish these connectivity goals. Concerns remain, however, as it is expected that our township alone will see several out-of-scope areas not addressed by the Accelerated High Speed Internet Program. These omitted areas leave approximately 700 Township of The Archipelago properties without much-needed bandwidth and access to new internet services. As a heavily vested connectivity partner sharing the same goal as the province—to "connect" our inhabitants—we have identified these areas and continue to correspond with staff from Infrastructure Ontario and Bell to evaluate options and opportunities.

The Township of The Archipelago appeals directly to you, to provide direction to include these "out-of-scope" areas. We urge your Ministry to consider expanding the program to include fixed wireless solutions for truly challenging locations. Furthermore, we urge the

Ministry to expand the program to include local internet service providers who were unable to participate due to contract and bonding requirements. These smaller, local ISPs can help Ontario meet its mandate by providing the last mile to many of the omitted areas. It is our hope that the Ministry of Infrastructure can work with municipalities, such as our own, to see Ontario meet its mandate by providing the last mile to many of the out-of-scope areas.

In addition, our municipality has utilized provincial modernization funding to create telecom tower infrastructure to address our residents stated need for cost-effective, high-speed internet services. We encourage the Province to consider existing infrastructure to deliver high-speed internet service to residents in the North

Finally, we thank the Province for this generational investment in Ontario's unserved and underserved regions. The Township will remain a strong project partner and will continue to advocate for its residents. Connectivity will enable our residents the opportunity to participate, grow, and flourish well into the future.

Respectfully yours,



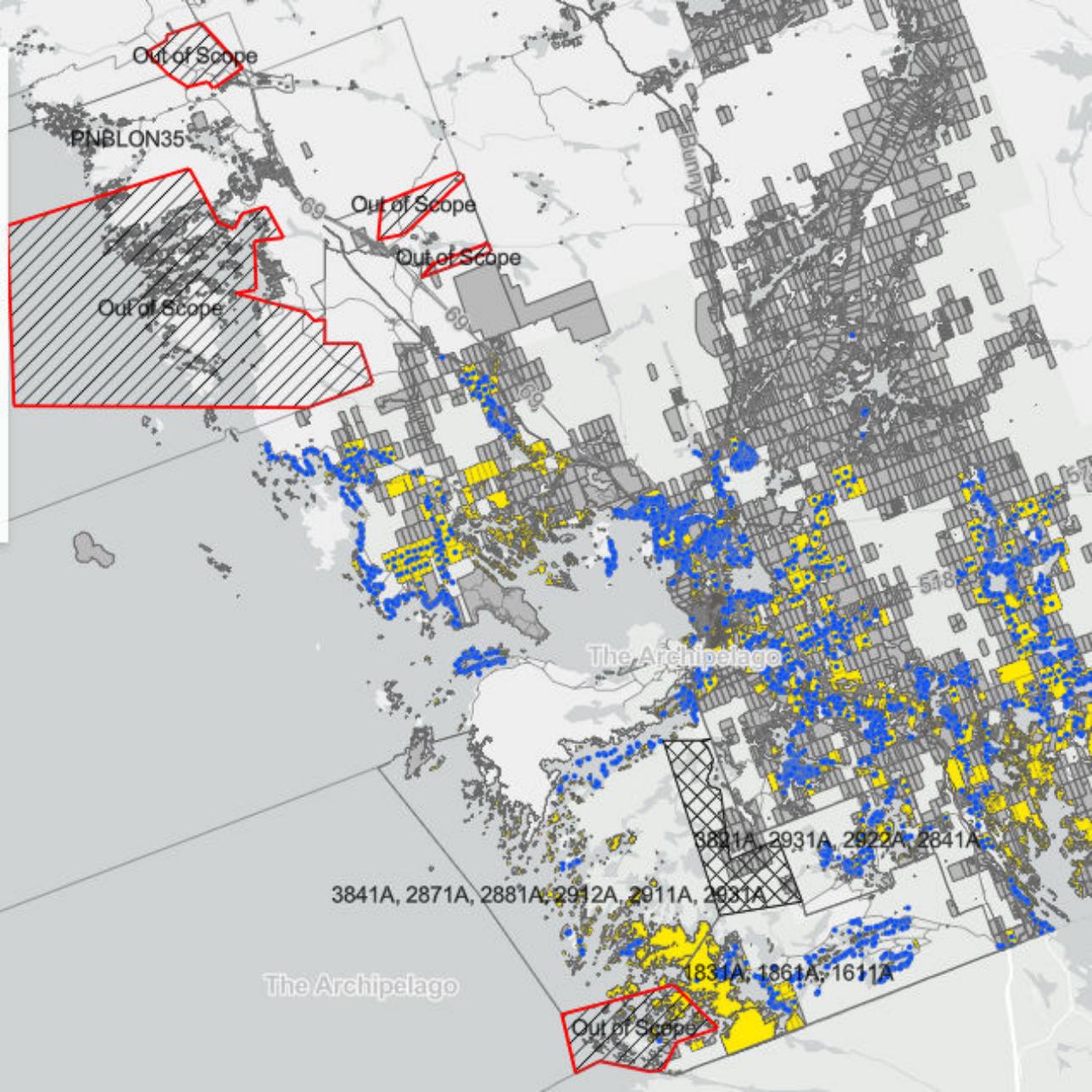
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Encl: Map ASHIP Out of Scope Archipelago, Archipelago Connectivity Investments  
Map, Archipelago Broadband Initiative Guiding Principals

CC: Hon Graydon Smith – MPP Parry Sound-Muskoka

# FSA

The following displays the Out-of-Scope areas in **The Township of The Archipelago** based on the provided dataset. These areas contain a total of 829 properties.



# Township of The Archipelago Investments in West Parry Sound Area Connectivity

Approximately \$500,000 invested in addressing connectivity – Parry Sound to Pointe au Baril



Infrastructure and an OPEN ACCESS model to support connectivity growth in the West Parry Sound area.

## Guiding Principles | Township of The Archipelago Broadband Initiative

### Current State

The residents and businesses of the Township of The Archipelago have struggled with lack of cost-effective, reliable, high-speed internet services for decades. Broadband initiatives from senior levels of government have not been applied in West Parry Sound (WPS), and our Township is under-served by the private sector for similar reasons; a perceived lack of critical mass.

### Catalyst for Broadband Infrastructure Build

Our strategic objective is to be the *infrastructure catalyst* that delivers cost-effective, reliable, high-speed internet services and enable consumers and businesses to thrive no matter where they are located in the Township. This strategic objective demands an innovative approach by a small municipality.

This innovative approach is demonstrated in our acquisition of a surplus MNR tower in Parry Sound, now named the WPS SMART Tower, in recognition of its critical role in all West Parry Sound municipal broadband initiatives. Modernization funds are now being directed towards the building of a backbone network that links fibre-based bandwidth from Parry Sound to the South and North Archipelago.

### Guiding Principles

Our path forward is guided by the following principles:

1. Ensure cost-effective, high speed internet service is available to all segments of our community; namely, permanent residences, seasonal residences, businesses, government facilities, on-shore, off-shore, etc.
2. We recognize that our community segments have different internet requirements, but share a common need for reliable, cost-effective high-speed internet solutions.
3. We support and encourage *consumer choice* for our residents and to address different segment needs.
4. There is room for many different technologies and vendors for the delivery of internet services and to ensure redundancy.
5. The Township recognizes, encourages, and considers internet service companies that have previously invested in our community and supported service to it.
6. The Township will consider and support Canadian solutions first, and North American solutions second, as a Canadian government institution.

***The Township's official vision:***

“ The Township of The Archipelago recognizes that high-speed internet is an essential service and as such must ensure that reliable, cost-effective high-speed internet service is available to all segments of our community; namely, permanent residences, seasonal residences, businesses, government facilities, on-shore, off-shore, etc. ”

**Q&A****WHY DOES THE TOWNSHIP OF THE ARCHIPELAGO FEEL THIS IS IMPORTANT?**

The availability of cost-effective, high-speed internet is underpinning successful communities in Ontario.

- It is important to note that our entire society is migrating to online services as a way of life. The internet has become the De Facto Standard for communication and the future of our economy, prosperity for our businesses and citizens, and the connection to rapid response essential services will rely on high-speed internet accessibility for all.
- Rural northern communities have long suffered from lack of proper internet;
- Slow speeds, unreliable service, and expensive rates have created a substantive disparity for families, businesses, and seasonal residents who live in the Township.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the need for high speed, reliable internet services at cost-effective rates for distance learning, work from home, video social events, and others.

**HOW CAN A SMALL MUNICIPALITY DO THIS?**

There are a number of ways municipalities in southern Ontario have accelerated the provisioning of high-speed internet services in their communities. The Township will take advantage of a number of strategies to encourage the development of high speed, cost-effective, reliable internet services.

**WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS WAYS MUNICIPALITIES CAN ACCELERATE BROADBAND EXPANSION?**

- Leverage private public partnerships – form partnerships with service providers and seek private investments.
- Create network backbone that service providers can utilize to serve our marketplace.
- Encourage internet service companies that have previously invested in our communities and supported service to our Township.
- Establish policies to promote broadband deployment, such as build once and share infrastructure.

- Reserve funds to leverage external funding opportunities from more senior levels of government.
- Partner with neighbouring municipalities and First Nations.
- Municipality can become a competitive ISP and compete with the private sector.

#### WHAT CAN THE TOWNSHIP BRING TO THE TABLE?

- The Township owns the West Parry Sound SMART Tower that can exploit existing fibre-based networks provisioned in/to Parry Sound;
- Leverage our SMART Tower and other municipal assets/infrastructure:
  - Maintain infrastructure for Township's business continuity and internal needs;
  - Explore leasing existing towers (colocation) and potential tower enhancements based on a sustainable business plan.
- Invest in adjoining tower infrastructure to extend service to our municipality, e.g., Parry Sound Area Industrial Park;
- Leverage 96+ km of the Henvey Wind Transmission Corridor infrastructure that the Township has identified for carrying bandwidth;
- Off-shore municipal assets, off-shore community partners, and a market with pent-up demand for reliable, cost-effective, high-speed internet.

#### WHAT ARE THE TOWNSHIP'S TOP PRIORITIES?

- **Connectivity** for all residents allowing them to participate fully in the digital world.
- **Recognition** by service providers that our community segments have different internet requirements, but share a common need for reliable, cost-effective high-speed internet solutions.
- **Consumer choice** for our residents and services that address different segment needs.
- **Room** for many different technologies and vendors for the delivery of internet services and to ensure redundancy.
- **Reduction** of visual impact while permitting the development of high-quality networks.
- **Leverage** broadband to foster economic development, business attraction, expansion, and retention.
- **Connectivity** for the Township's municipal needs.
- **Support** Canadian solutions first, and North American solutions second, as a Canadian government institution