

## Questions about SWIFT? We have answers.

We're working hard to fund the construction of broadband for everyone. We know you have questions about how we're going to accomplish our goals and invest our funding. Below, you'll find answers to some of the common questions we get asked about SWIFT and the work we're doing to connect everyone in Southwestern Ontario, Caledon, and the Niagara Region.

### WHAT IS SWIFT?

SouthWestern Integrated Fibre Technology Inc. (SWIFT) is a not-for-profit, collective broadband initiative that is funding the construction of an affordable, open-access, ultra-high-speed fibre-optic regional broadband network for everyone in Southwestern Ontario, Caledon and the Niagara Region. To overcome our region's broadband infrastructure gaps, SWIFT has developed a long-term plan to help more than 3.5 million Ontarians, or 25% of Ontario's population, to connect and keep pace in a changing digital world. The project is leveraging \$180 million in combined investments by the federal and provincial governments and over \$17 million in investments by municipalities across the region. SWIFT is governed by public sector organizations, large commercial enterprises, small and medium sized businesses, local farmers, and residents.

To learn more about SWIFT:

- Watch our [YouTube video](#)
- Read our [2018 project update Briefing Note](#)
- [Sign up for our Mailing List](#)
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### WHAT ARE SWIFT'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES?

SWIFT is based on seven guiding principles:

1. Standards-based architecture: the system will interoperate with all other systems and will be easy to support;
2. High availability and scalability: SWIFT will be available at any moment in time, whenever users need it and it will scale to tens of millions of user connections and applications dynamically without requiring any additional capital outlays or causing system delays;
3. Neutrality and open access: there will be no barriers to entry for users and providers to access the network, levelling the playing field and ensuring that contractual mechanisms and oversight are in place to ensure the network is open and accessible to all;
4. Ubiquity and equitability: the network will be physically accessible to everyone and everyone will face similar costs to provide applications and services over the system or use applications and services on the system, regardless of geographic point of ingress/egress;

5. Competition and affordability: SWIFT will promote competition in services and applications by providing open access, high-availability, and a differentiated system that is affordable to users regardless of population density;
6. Broad public-sector user participation: SWIFT has received broad public-sector support from county level and municipal governments, post-secondary educational institutions, health care institutions, community networks, and other 'MUSH' sector organizations. The support of all Ontario Public Service (OPS) and Broader Public Sector (BPS) users are critical, as these organizations are 'anchor tenants' to the system and create the underlying foundation that makes it feasible to extend service to private enterprises, small and medium sized business, farmers and residents;
7. Sustainability: all users will pay fees to access the network, which will be published and publicly available to ensure transparency. These fees will provide the cash flow sustainability required to support ongoing operating and capital costs, and ensure that the network will not be dependent on taxpayer subsidies in the future. After Phase 1 is complete and the network is operational SWIFT will collect a small percentage of revenue from the successful Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) from each service sold to consumers over the SWIFT Network. The residuals will be added to SWIFT's Broadband Development Fund (BDF) along with sponsorship funds and more upper level government funding. SWIFT's Board of Directors will use the BDF to continue to subsidize providers to build fibre-optic infrastructure until the entire region has access to fibre-based broadband.

The Intelligent Community Forum Canada (ICF) has adopted the same principles as SWIFT in its recent [position paper](#), which argues for broadband to be considered a basic utility and which makes the case for widespread fibre diffusion as key to enabling Canada's competitiveness in the digital economy.

### **DON'T WE ALREADY HAVE HIGH-SPEED INTERNET? IS SWIFT DUPLICATING EXISTING SERVICES?**

In Ontario, and across Canada, rural, remote and First Nation communities encounter substantial barriers to building and expanding broadband infrastructure networks. Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) are reluctant to extend services into these areas because there are significant up-front costs and marginal to non-existent rates of return. As a result, much of rural Ontario's current Internet infrastructure networks are sparse, ineffective, and built on outdated technology. This situation also breeds a near-monopoly in the market that triggers higher prices, fewer choices and less innovation. While both the federal and provincial governments have acknowledged this issue through funding programs, broadband infrastructure gaps continue to grow. SWIFT's affordable, open-access, ultra-high-speed fibre-optic regional broadband network will make it easier, faster and more affordable for service providers to deliver services to consumers.

### **HOW IS THE SWIFT NETWORK BEING BUILT AND WHO IS BUILDING IT?**

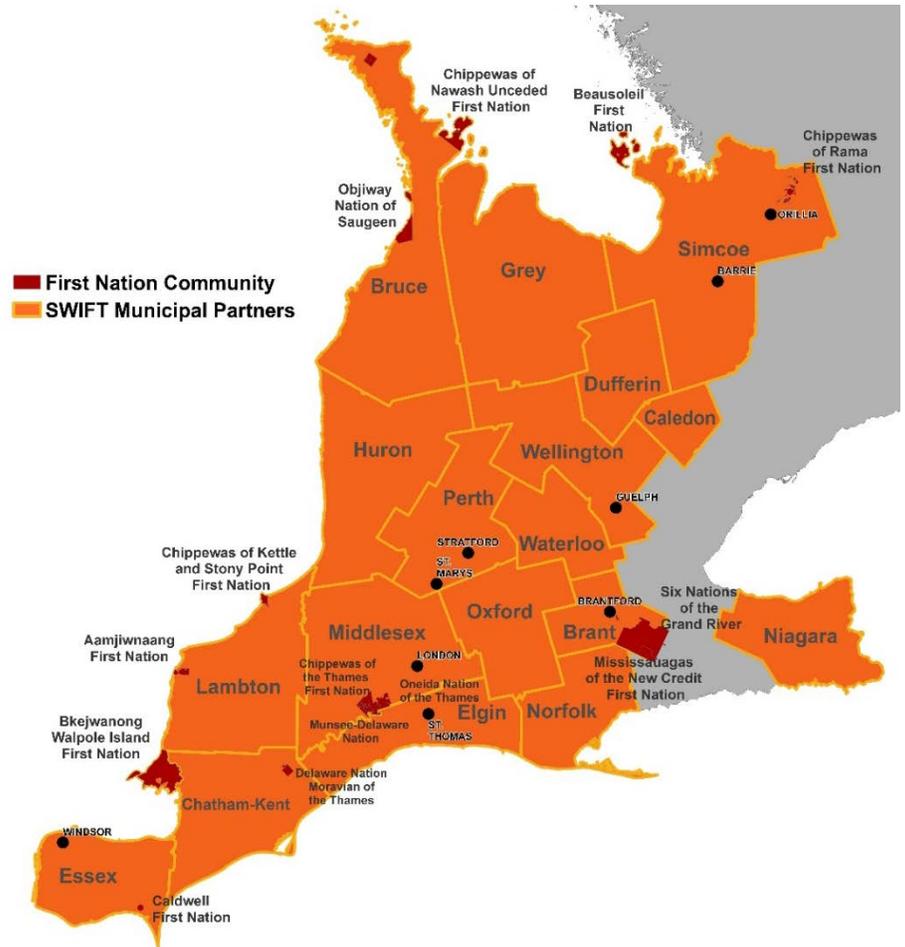
SWIFT represents a significant change in the way we think about and fund investments in broadband. Our network will be built, owned and operated by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), with subsidies and oversight by the SWIFT Board of Directors with significant public-sector representation. In May 2017, SWIFT issued a Request for Prequalification (RFPQ) whereby twenty-eight (28) TSPs were prequalified and became eligible, as potential proponents, to participate in the SWIFT RFP processes. The [final list of prequalified TSPs](#) was released in July 2017. Contractors who have an interest in contributing to the RFP submission should contact the prequalified TSPs directly.

## WHY IS SWIFT ONLY FUNDING FIBRE-OPTIC INFRASTRUCTURE?

SWIFT will only fund fibre-optic infrastructure as it is the only solution that is scalable to not only meet today's needs, but to meet infinitely increasing future demands. Fibre connectivity to backhaul signals improves the performance of existing telephone and cable systems and supports next generation long-term evolution (LTE) mobile wireless systems and fixed wireless systems. This will result in improvements in broadband access in the short-term.

## WILL MY COMMUNITY GET CONNECTED TO THE SWIFT NETWORK?

Anyone living, working, or running a business in any community that belongs to a SWIFT member county or municipality will be covered by the project design. By 2021, some dwellings will be connected to fibre and many should have improved access from existing access technologies (like wireless) that leverage fibre's greater capacity. Our members include: Brant County, Bruce County, Town of Caledon, Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Dufferin County, Elgin County, Essex County, Grey County, Huron County, Lambton County, Middlesex County, Regional Municipality of Niagara, Norfolk County, City of Orillia, Oxford County, Perth County, Simcoe County, Waterloo Region, Wellington County and the City of Windsor. If you live within the boundaries of any of these communities, we'll be working with your local leaders, and service providers to connect you, over time, through our project plan. Phase 1 of the project (2016-2021) will begin this process.



## WILL EVERYONE IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO, CALEDON AND THE NIAGARA REGION GET CONNECTED TO THE SWIFT NETWORK IN PHASE 1 OF THE PROJECT PLAN? (2016-2021)

Phase 1 of the SWIFT project will invest approximately \$288 million into building broadband infrastructure. Unfortunately, this is not enough to connect everyone within the first phase of the project. For this reason, after Phase 1 is complete and the network is operational, SWIFT will collect a small percentage of revenue from the successful Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) from each service sold to consumers over the SWIFT Network. The residuals will be added to SWIFT's Broadband Development Fund (BDF) along with sponsorship funds and more upper level government funding when available. SWIFT's Board of Directors will use the BDF to continue to subsidize providers to build fibre-optic infrastructure until the entire region has access to fibre-based broadband.

## **WHY SHOULD MY COMMUNITY BECOME A MEMBER OF SWIFT?**

SWIFT is a buying group of municipalities, First Nations, school boards, universities, hospitals, businesses and community network groups from Orillia to Windsor including Niagara and Caledon. Aggregating the demand as a buying group will increase the buying power and negotiating clout of SWIFT while providing subsidies to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) to make the entirety of their investment viable. In 2016, participating member municipalities leveraged nearly \$15 million each to secure \$180 million in provincial and federal funding – rather than attempting to leverage smaller, individual investments as individual applicants and potentially receiving a small fraction of that funding. By investing in this project together, members achieve greater buying power and influence, which is already dramatically changing the landscape for how broadband infrastructure is funded, built and provided in Southwestern Ontario, Caledon and the Niagara Region. To learn more about becoming a SWIFT member, please visit our [membership webpage](#) or contact Adriana Dekker, Stakeholder Relations Manager at [adriana.dekker@swiftnetwork.ca](mailto:adriana.dekker@swiftnetwork.ca).

## **WHY CAN'T MY COMMUNITY CONNECT ME DIRECTLY?**

In Ontario, very few municipalities have undertaken owning and operating community broadband networks (for example: Kingston and Stratford). While it's considered a basic telecommunications service, broadband access is not considered a core service for local governments (or governments at any level), so there is no mandate and limited resources for municipalities to own and operate a broadband network. Most municipalities face the same pressures as consumers when it comes to choosing affordable broadband – including lack of choice and lack of influence in the market. There is also a significant lack of information about where existing infrastructure exists and about the powers of municipalities to compel broadband network construction – leading to some myths and misunderstandings. Before and without SWIFT, municipalities are limited in their ability to influence service providers to build fibre-optic infrastructure and there is little incentive for service providers to build where they do not perceive a significant return on investment. This is the key reason that the original Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus members and additional municipal partners have joined SWIFT – to increase local government influence and ensure broadband networks are built and services are extended to communities that need them.

## **WHY ARE BIG CITIES JOINING SWIFT? ISN'T THIS A RURAL BROADBAND PROJECT?**

SWIFT is a regional broadband initiative. We need every possible partner in the region on board to make sure we can build an efficient, effective, and economical network. Urban cores are undoubtedly better connected than our most rural and remote communities – but having urban centres involved helps increase our market influence, makes the project attractive to service providers, and ensures important geographic and economic hubs are connected not only to each other but to smaller markets. Also, economically challenged neighbourhoods with urban centres are generally not as well served as more affluent neighbourhoods. Our entire region needs SWIFT and the more we can work collaboratively with all communities, the more robust and revolutionary our network will be.

## **WHEN WILL CONSTRUCTION START?**

SWIFT anticipates selecting the Preferred Proponent(s) in the spring of 2018, with construction of the network commencing mid to late 2018. There will likely be multiple RFP and construction phases during the first five years of the project and into the long-term development of the network.

## **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO BUILD? WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE WHEN IT'S FINISHED?**

SWIFT will provide next generation fibre optic connectivity to the region through the first five-year phase. Initially, SWIFT will provide fibre optic coverage to all counties and separated municipalities in southwestern Ontario, Caledon, and the Niagara Region, reaching approximately 350 communities with a total population of 3.5 million. The goal is to connect every resident, farm, business and public organization to fibre optics by 2040 or sooner. Like you, we want everyone to get access to high speed Internet as quickly as possible – we wish we could make it happen yesterday! Currently, we estimate that our region faces an infrastructure deficit of around \$4 billion when it comes to fibre-optic connectivity, and Phase 1 of our project will invest approximately \$288 million toward addressing that gap. We've designed our procurement process for Phase 1 to help us find out exactly where existing infrastructure and service gaps exist, so we can develop an accurate plan for addressing those gaps as efficiently and as effectively as possible. As the largest regional publicly funded broadband project to date (and the largest investment for Ontario and Canada through the Small Communities Fund (SCF)), we want to make sure we get it right.

## **WHY IS IT TAKING SO LONG TO BUILD THE SWIFT NETWORK?**

Ever heard the line, "Rome wasn't built in a day"? Well, holistic, ultra-high-speed fibre-optic networks can't be built overnight, either. We know it's frustrating to hear – but we're hard at work making sure we build the best solutions to our region's connectivity challenges. SWIFT is a once-in-an-era chance to change the way broadband infrastructure is funded, built, and operated in Ontario – and in Canada. We're the largest regional publicly funded broadband project in the country to date – and we want to make sure we get it right. We're extremely sensitive to the fact that most of our funding comes from public investments and our community-driven priorities mean we want to ensure that investment is spent wisely. We also want to design the best possible network that solves as many of the connectivity challenges in our region as possible, so we're engaging critical experts and stakeholders throughout the process to make sure we get it right. Our region faces an infrastructure deficit of approximately \$4 billion when it comes to fibre-optic connectivity. Phase 1 of SWIFT will invest approximately \$288 million and represents critical first steps in addressing this gap. Keep in mind that, although we've been around since 2012, SWIFT only became fully funded in July 2016. We moved very quickly from funding to prequalifying 28 service providers and anticipate the first phase of construction to begin in early 2018 – meaning we'll have moved from funding to shovels in the ground in approximately 18-24 months:

### **Project status:**

- May 2017: Launched a [two-stage Request for Prequalification](#) (RFPQ) to identify qualified Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), specific service gaps across the region, and priority areas for eligible SWIFT investments
- July 2017: Released [final list of 28 prequalified TSPs](#)
- January 2018: Released [first in a series of upcoming Request for Proposals](#) (RFPs) for first phase of network construction

### **Next steps:**

- January - June 2018: Continue to consult with municipal partners to identify where fibre will be built
- Mid 2018: Close RFP and begin construction
- Ongoing: Continue membership drive

## **WHICH AREAS WILL BE BUILT FIRST?**

In May 2017, SWIFT issued a Request for Prequalification (RFPQ) whereby twenty-eight (28) Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) were prequalified and became eligible, as potential proponents, to participate in the SWIFT RFP processes. The [final list of prequalified TSPs](#) was released in July 2017. In January 2018, SWIFT launched its [first in a series of upcoming Request for Proposals](#) (RFPs). This document was based on the information that we have collected from TSPs, municipalities and community members. During this phase of the project, our 28 prequalified TSPs will be able to submit a proposal in response to the RFP for the first phase of network construction. Their responses will determine where and when the fibre will be built. SWIFT anticipates selecting the Preferred Proponent(s) in the spring of 2018, with construction of the network commencing mid to late 2018. We're committed to transparency and accountability, and we'll continue sharing as much information as possible throughout the process.

## **WHEN WILL I GET BETTER SERVICE AS A RESULT OF SWIFT?**

While we expect construction to begin in 2018, and Phase 1 to be substantially complete by the end of 2021, it is still too early to say when homes and businesses will receive faster services. But that doesn't mean that things aren't improving. SWIFT has already fundamentally changed the way the public sector is investing in broadband, and with the recent CRTC ruling that Internet is a basic telecommunications service, the work we're doing should accelerate the long-range forecast for when Ontarians can expect affordable, ultra-high-speed broadband service. We encourage you to reach out to your elected officials and local community leaders to underscore how important broadband infrastructure is to your life and livelihood, and to encourage them to explore ways that additional funding programs may be used to support local broadband projects that align with SWIFT.

## **WHY IS THIS BEING PUBLICLY FUNDED? WHY NOT LEAVE THIS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR?**

Private businesses must, understandably, invest their resources where they can expect the greatest return on investment. Service providers often argue that it's difficult to invest in building expensive infrastructure in areas where there aren't enough customers to guarantee a return on investment. This is where SWIFT comes in: SWIFT will leverage public investment to subsidize and incentivize service providers to build where there are infrastructure gaps, such as low density rural and remote communities, which will help offset some of the risk associated with building the infrastructure. Most critically, SWIFT's open access principles mean that the network will encourage more competition from a greater number of service providers, lowering prices and increasing choices for consumers. By aggregating the demand of members and supporting the building of infrastructure in urban and rural areas, the "SWIFT Effect" supports the business cases of telecom service providers.

## **WILL SWIFT SOLVE 'LAST MILE' CHALLENGES?**

The \$288 million estimated for the initial construction of SWIFT, is expected to result in fibre connectivity to existing telephone, cable and wireless systems yielding improvements in broadband access in the short-term. Over 2700km of new fibre is estimated to be built in the first phase of the project. Out of a typical 96-strand count fibre cable, 94 strands will be available to potentially provide last-mile connections to individual homes and businesses and strand counts of cable segments may be higher. Connecting everyone in Southwestern Ontario, Caledon and the Niagara Region requires overcoming an infrastructure deficit of approximately \$4 billion (depending on geography and benchmarks). Without the SWIFT model in place, there is no mechanism for addressing this gap fairly and equitably over the long-term. SWIFT will continue to subsidize Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) until everyone in Southwestern Ontario is connected by fibre optics.

## **WHO WILL OWN THE SWIFT NETWORK? HOW WILL SERVICE PROVIDERS BE INVOLVED?**

Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) will participate through an open procurement process and they will build, own, and operate the network. SWIFT will be an open-access network, where all service providers compete to deliver services to consumers. As a buying group, SWIFT will ensure greater competition between TSPs. More competition gives consumers more choices, which leads to better services and typically lower prices. This has been documented by the CRTC and Industry Canada, as well as demonstrated by numerous models from across Canada and around the world as reported in the SWIFT Feasibility Study. Open access is a requirement of the federal government funding program.

## **WILL SWIFT BE A SERVICE PROVIDER?**

The SWIFT network is an integrated part of the telecom service providers networks. SWIFT will be built, owned and operated by telecom providers, with subsidies and oversight by a Board of Directors with significant public-sector representation. Subscribers won't be signing contracts or receiving bills from SWIFT for Internet services. SWIFT will be subsidizing service providers to build fibre-optic infrastructure across Southwestern Ontario, Caledon, and the Niagara Region.

## **WHAT DOES THE CRTC DO?**

Residential Internet users are retail customers who buy Internet services from an independent service provider or large cable or telephone company. The CRTC regulates radio, television and telecommunications services in Canada – but does not usually regulate the prices or the way Internet services are billed to retail customers. At the wholesale level, the CRTC requires that large companies sell access to their networks under specific terms and conditions. Service providers also use this access, in conjunction with their own networks, to offer Internet and other services to their own retail customers. You can learn more about how the CRTC sets wholesale rates at:

<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/internet/facbill.htm>

## **WHAT DOES THE CRTC RULING ON BROADBAND AS A BASIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE MEAN FOR SWIFT?**

On [December 21, 2016](#), the CRTC ruled that all Canadians – including rural and remote communities – should have access to broadband Internet service. They also set new targets for these services:

- Speeds of at least 50 Mbps download/10 Mbps upload (fixed broadband services)
- Unlimited data option for fixed broadband services
- The latest mobile wireless technology available not only to all homes and businesses, but also along all major Canadian roads

At the same time, the CRTC announced that [\\$750 million in funding](#) will be available over the first five years to help communities meet these targets. To be eligible, projects must be complementary to existing and future private investment and public funding, focus on underserved areas, and be managed at arm's length by a third party. SWIFT is pleased to see our national regulatory body take significant steps toward supporting the importance of connecting rural Canadians. SWIFT will make this ruling come to life by funding the construction of broadband for everyone in Southwestern Ontario, Caledon, the and Niagara Region.

## **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CONSUMERS:**

The CRTC has set a target of connecting 90% of Canadians to Internet services that meet their target speeds within five years (2021), with the rest of the country being connected by 2031. There is no easy, immediate solution for connecting many of the rural and remote communities that are currently facing the biggest hurdle to accessing the CRTC target speeds. The ruling also did not set any benchmarks for ensuring Internet services are affordable. If you live in the SWIFT region, the CRTC ruling means that the federal regulatory body has endorsed the principles we've been advocating for since 2011 – which is good news for helping accelerate our work through increased participation and cooperation with our partners and with service providers. The most important news is the momentum that comes from the combination of the federal budget commitments to broadband investments in rural and remote communities, the CRTC ruling, and the federal and provincial investment in SWIFT. Taken together, they point to our region likely exceeding both the service targets and the achievement dates on several fronts.

## **WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M UNSATISFIED WITH MY INTERNET SERVICE?**

If you are unsatisfied with your Internet service, we suggest raising these issues with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) to see if they can be resolved. ISPs are ultimately responsible for the equipment they offer, their billing and marketing practices, their quality of service and customer relations. If you have issues with your ISP, you should contact their customer service lines and escalate your concerns up to the manager level (if necessary). If your issues cannot be resolved or your Internet service does not improve, there are at least two courses of action you can take:

### **1. Switch ISPs:**

- a. You are free to switch Internet service providers. To see which ISPs currently provide service in your area, enter your address in the Government of Canada's [Eligibility Map](#).

### **2. Make a complaint:**

- a. You may wish to bring your concerns to the attention of the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services (CCTS), an independent organization that has been established to provide consumers and small businesses with recourse when they are unable to resolve disagreements with their telecommunications service providers. For more information concerning the CCTS, including how to file a complaint, please visit the CCTS website at [www.ccts-cprst.ca/en/complaints/guide](http://www.ccts-cprst.ca/en/complaints/guide). The CCTS can also be reached toll-free at 1-888-221-1687, or by mail at P.O. Box 81088, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1B1.
- b. If your issue falls outside of the mandate of the CCTS, you may wish to contact the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC): Canada toll-free: [1-877-249-CRTC](tel:1-877-249-CRTC) (2782) or toll-free TTY line: [1-877-909-CRTC](tel:1-877-909-CRTC) (2782).

## HOW CAN I SUPPORT SWIFT?

We appreciated the great support we received from citizens, businesses, and organizations across the region as we worked toward securing funding. Now, as we work toward implementing the project, we still welcome your stories about why SWIFT is important to you and why you want to see the project succeed. Your continued support and engagement through letters of support, following and interacting with us on social media, and expressing your support to your community leaders are all critical to helping us continue to move forward.

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