December 18, 2015

By email to: ic.telecomsubmission-soumissiontelecom.ic@canada.ca

Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet
Langevin Block
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A3


Dear Madam:

I am writing to you on behalf of our city, Barrie, concerning a recent CRTC decision that could have negative implications for our community as well as other cities like ours. We have recently become aware that rule changes made by the CRTC could jeopardize the continued growth of broadband Fibre-to-the-Home (FTTH) networks. Any delay in the deployment of high-speed FTTH networks is a significant concern for us.

The City of Barrie is centrally located along the Highway 400 corridor with cottage country to the north and Toronto to the south. Barrie’s population is over 143,000 and has a median age of 37.2. Barrie is Central Ontario’s economic hub and has been identified as an Urban Growth Centre by the Province of Ontario. Barrie’s population is expected to reach 210,000 by 2031 with 101,000 projected jobs. There are over 8,600 businesses, including 4 major data centres. Barrie is home to 150 regional, national and international head offices. The key industries include: construction, advanced manufacturing, professional services, real estate, retail, and health care.

Access to modern high-speed data networks like FTTH is critical for the economic and social well-being of a growing city such as ours. We understand the CRTC’s recent rule changes will serve as a dampening influence on companies’ decisions to invest in FTTH networks and so we strongly encourage the government to reverse the CRTC’s decision and revert to the rules that were in place prior to the recent changes.

Investment in FTTH is vital to cities like ours. Our citizens expect access to state-of-the-art communications services they see advertised, and our industries and local businesses need access to these networks to grow. From the small home-based businesses that engage in e-commerce, to the large industrial employers that are increasingly accessing cloud-based technology solutions, robust digital infrastructure is quickly becoming an essential requirement for business competitiveness.

Fast and reliable connectivity is also a key enabler of the City’s efforts to diversify its economy through both attraction and growth of knowledge-based industries. Companies in these industries, as well as the talent base that they tend to employ, expect robust networks that can support their business and personal needs.
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We need the continued investments in FTTH that have been made in the past by companies like Bell so that our local businesses and citizens can continue to prosper and grow without having to gravitate to larger centres. This drives job creation, entrepreneurship, innovation, local investment, and helps support our continued economic and social growth by keeping jobs and families in our local area.

In order for companies such as Bell to be able to continue to invest in these networks, the government must ensure that the rules that the CRTC has for access to these networks are fair to those who are investing billions of dollars in private funds. To that end, we support Bell’s petition to the Government in Council, and we encourage you to require the CRTC to reverse its recent rule changes and maintain the existing rules that have supported the significant investment in FTTH networks already made by Bell in the largest centres and that can also be made here with the right rules in place.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Mayor Jeff Lehman

Copies to:
Director General, Telecommunications Policy Branch
The Hon. Navdeep Bains, P.C., M.P., Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development
The Hon. Amarjeet Sohi, P.C., M.P., Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
MP, John Brassard, Barrie-Innisfil
MP, Alex Nuttall, Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte