

June 24, 2020

Honourable Jason Kenney  
Premier of Alberta  
Office of the Premier  
307 Legislature Building  
10800 – 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Kenney,

As Alberta safely and gradually reopens and we carefully restart the economy, every region and every community will play a role in bringing jobs and prosperity back to our province. During this relaunch, Sturgeon County highly recommends that the Alberta government work with municipalities and the private sector to jointly invest in reliable broadband service. This funding would help create even more economic and educational opportunities in rural, remote and underserved areas of the province. In short, investment in broadband is about making life better for Albertans.

During the past couple of months, Albertans have worked together through new and unsettling disruptions to their daily life, starting with the sudden shift from working in the office to working remotely. By doing our part and staying home to help stop the spread of COVID-19, Albertans have demonstrated the need to be connected to learn, work, and run their businesses. Moreover, functioning remotely will continue to be a regular way of life for many in this new environment, and fast reliable internet is critical to Alberta's competitiveness, as well as supporting our social and cultural fabric.

The effects of unreliable digital connectivity are especially pronounced in Alberta's rural communities. This is true, for example, in the agricultural sector where many auctions and equipment sales have been moved on-line in response to the pandemic, and broadband limitations now make it difficult to buy or sell livestock, equipment and robotics. Rural residents are also struggling to stay connected with their personal networks, impacting mental health.


The importance of broadband was recently underscored by an Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB) study which identified it as "critical to the sustainable economic development and increased quality of life in virtually every community." The report specifically highlights the challenges around connecting rural residence and rural businesses over sparsely populated areas, indicating there needs to be strategies to bridge these connectivity gaps. Increased broadband access and internet speeds are a driver for global economic competitiveness, enabling the attraction and retention of businesses and skilled workers; this has a direct impact on the Region's contribution to the GDP. According to EMRB's report, the potential impact of a wider adoption of digital technologies by Canadian industry could boost Alberta's GDP by \$44.3 billion dollars over the next ten-years.

Rural municipal governments will continue to work with other governments and stakeholders to find solutions that will deliver affordable, reliable access to broadband across Alberta. As the federal and provincial governments move closer to having shovels in the ground on stimulus, we strongly encourage the launch of a broadband infrastructure program. Additionally, we respectfully request that broadband be addressed within the forthcoming *Alberta Infrastructure Act*, as we believe this infrastructure is vital to the needs of the Alberta population and to growing the economy.

Further, governments and the private sector will need to collaborate on an approach that leverages their respective strengths to provide the type of connectivity that fits the specific needs of a community today and for future generations. Government can design economic and cost-sharing models for projects where market forces do not work, while maintaining a regulatory environment that provides certainty and allows for a reasonable return on investment.

We look forward to working with all levels of government and the private sector to continue to improve connectivity in rural and remote areas and expand service so municipalities can participate fully in the digital economy.

Yours Sincerely,



Alanna Hnatiw  
Mayor, Sturgeon County

cc: Honourable Nate Glubish  
Minister of Service Alberta

Honourable Kaycee Madu, QC  
Minister of Municipal Affairs

Honourable Dale Nally, MLA  
MLA for Morinville -St. Albert

Mr. Shane Getson  
MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland

Mr. Dane Lloyd  
Member of Parliament, Sturgeon River-Parkland

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