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# Dufferin-Caledon region to see $12 million investment to rural broadband infrastrucure

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Many rural households across Dufferin-Caledon will soon be introduced to the 21st century, with Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) set to invest $12.4 million in a broadband internet infrastructure expansion in the region.

Announced on Monday (June 1), the proposal will see $7.2 million worth of work carried out in Dufferin County, with an additional $5.2 million invested in Caledon. The project, which will improve access to faster, reliable internet services for hundreds of homes in the area, is being co-funded by the provincial and federal governments.

Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, informed media the improvements in the Dufferin-Caledon area have been given the green light, and that SWIFT was now in the process of evaluating bids from contractors to complete the work.

?I am very pleased to see Dufferin and Caledon be included in this funding. I thank Minister Hardeman for working with our communities to get this critical infrastructure service that is needed,? Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones told the Free Press. ?Reliable internet connection is an important investment for our businesses, agriculture community and students.?

Specific details surrounding the initiative, particularly regarding the number of homes that stand to benefit, is unknown at this time, although it is believed to be a substantial amount. Melissa O'Brien, Manager of Communications and Stakeholder Relations with SWIFT, said more information would be forthcoming as soon as the organization hires a firm to complete the work.

?The number of premises passed, as well as construction timelines, network designs and implementation details are included in the proposals submitted by the service providers during the procurement process. Therefore, such details will remain unknown until SWIFT has completed its evaluation assessment of all compliant proposals,? Ms. O'Brien said. ?However, it is important to note that during the evaluation process, SWIFT focuses on proposals that result in the best outcomes. Generally, ?best outcomes' means more homes passed.?

When asked to elaborate on the technology that would be installed, and how much of a difference this would make to rural homes who, currently, do not have access to high-speed internet, Ms. O'Brien stopped short of offering any guarantees.

?This information will remain unknown until after the RFPs have closed, and SWIFT has conducted a formal evaluation of all complaint bids for the Caledon and Dufferin areas,? she said. ?SWIFT will accept proposals based on Fibre-to-the-home (FTTH), Hybrid Fibre Coaxial (HFC), Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) and wireless technologies as long as they meet the minimum requirement of providing a 50/10 service.?

She added, ?Announcements of this nature will be provided after the evaluation is complete and contracts have been awarded to the internet service providers.?

The work to be carried out in Dufferin County and Caledon is part of the Ontario government's Broadband and Cellular Action Plan, which is expected to generate up to $1 billion in broadband investment across the province over the next five years. Approximately 220,000 homes and businesses stand to benefit from the project.

Dufferin County Warden Darren White has often spoke of the need to expand broadband services across the region during his time on county council. Following Monday's announcement, he was understandably pleased to hear his community stands to benefit to the tune of more than $5 million.

?Dufferin County is happy to have the Province of Ontario as a partner and driving force behind the SWIFT program. We are glad to

have partners that understand now, more than ever, that access to reliable, resilient and strong rural broadband is a necessity in rural Ontario,? Mr. White said.

SWIFT is expected to award contracts and formalize agreements with service providers in July.