

H&M COFI

HURON SHORE AND MANITOULIN ISLAND COMMUNITY OWNED FIBRE INFRASTRUCTURE

April 19, 2021

Dear Members of the H&M COFI Region

For many of you, this is the first newsletter to be delivered from the new H&M COFI Corporation, a federally registered non-profit company. H&M COFI and ROCK Networks are committed to building a fibre-based broadband network for our rural north. This high-speed Internet network will be made available to all residents and businesses in every part of the region, between Nairn Centre to Garden River FN, including the City of Elliot Lake, as well as Manitoulin and St. Joseph Islands.

H&M COFI will own the network and sell wholesale access to individual Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Residents, businesses, and institutions will buy Internet access and services directly from any ISPs operating on the network. This model will ensure that a reliable high-speed network, expected to offer data rates at a gigabit per second or higher, is available for all users in the region while providing a competitive market.

Whereas it has long been recognized that Internet service to the rural north has been below the government declared minimum download and upload speeds of 50 and 10 Megabits per second (Mbps), COVID has shown how our present infrastructure is inadequate to support today's growing educational, business, health care and personal needs.

Much progress has been made since H&M COFI's incorporation. The team has completed the first intake application for Stage 2 of the Improving Connectivity for Ontario (ICON) broadband program at the provincial level. A submission has also been made to the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) at the federal level. We have spoken to numerous Federal and Provincial Ministers and their staff responsible for these programs. They have all met out chair Georges Bilodeau's presentations with strong interest and support for the H&M COFI project and its proposed scope.

Additionally, we have launched the H&M COFI website www.hmcofi.com, have an H&M COFI Facebook page www.facebook.com/HMCOFI and are in the process of launching our LinkedIn profile which will be linked to our website. We encourage you to reference these sites for more information.

H&M COFI is asking that you actively support our initiative so that it becomes a reality this year. As part of their decision-making process, both the ICON and UBF program teams are currently in the process of assessing the degree of support being expressed within our catchment area.

The strength of our proposal and its ultimate success in obtaining government funding heavily depends on the support of the entire region. You can make a difference.

This is how you can help:

1. **Letter of Support:** Thank you to those groups who have already actively engaged by supplying a Letter of Support for this initiative. Hopefully, other groups have met with their boards or councils since H&M COFI's last outreach to explain the project. If you haven't supplied us with a Letter of Support to date, we ask that you use the attached template to confirm your approval of H&M COFI's intention to build a high-speed broadband network to supply Internet coverage to 100% of the catchment area.
2. **Contact Information:** We have attempted to update our database of contacts through website searches and phone calls. It may not be accurate to allow us to stay in touch. Please forward us the up-to-date name, title, email address and preferred phone number(s) of your primary and alternate points of contact within your organization. This will ensure you are kept up-to-date with our continued progress.
3. **Logo:** For all who submit Letters of Support, H&M COFI would like to acknowledge you, with your permission, by listing your group's name and logo on the *Partners and Supporters'* page of our website. If you wish to be recognized in this manner, please attach a JPEG file of your logo.
4. **Speed Tests:** It is essential to encourage your board or council members, colleagues and family members to take the Internet speed test that one can access via the Home Page of our website. Residential and business speed requirements are often significantly different. Speeds collected from these tests will assist in the funding process by proving our need for faster service and ultimately in the design and construction of the network.

Forward your emails with the above inclusions to info@hmcofi.com.

As with all government funding applications, time is of the essence. We therefore ask that you actively support this H&M COFI initiative that is crucial to bringing enhanced broadband services to every residential and business premise throughout our region. Your formal expressions of support at this juncture are greatly appreciated, as well as any other forms of ongoing support that your organization could offer us as we move forward.

We are always available for your input and questions.

Respectfully yours

Jo Anne Matheson
Board Member, H&M COFI Corporation
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Enclosure: Template for Letter of Support