

August 11, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Federal Cabinet
Via email to each Minister

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
Francois-Philippe.Champagne@parl.gc.ca

Re: Council Resolution Supporting Affordable Internet

Please be advised the Council of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent at its regular meeting held on August 9, 2021 passed the attached resolution.

Internet is a necessity, not a luxury for the vast majority of Canadians – a fact that has been highlighted throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite being an essential utility, too many people are struggling to afford reliable internet services, while some don't have access to broadband internet at all. Ontario residents, and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, should never have to choose between paying their internet bill and other essentials such as food, medication, or housing expenses.

On May 27th, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) arbitrarily reversed its 2019 Rates Order concerning wholesale internet rates charged by Canada's largest carriers to smaller companies. This decision was devastating for consumers as it effectively guarantees internet prices will continue to rise despite the fact that Canadians already pay some of the highest internet prices in the world. Additionally, this decision directly impacts many smaller internet service providers (ISPs) and threatens hundreds of well-paying jobs and tens of millions in investments that would benefit communities in Ontario.

Issued in August of 2019, the CRTC's 2019 Rates Order confirmed the large carriers [systematically broke](#) rate-setting rules to grossly inflate their costs of providing network access. The CRTC set new rates and ordered the large carriers to repay amounts they overcharged competitors during its proceeding. The 2019 Rates Order was based on a rigorous, evidence-based, 4-year long regulatory process. It was upheld on appeals by the Federal Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Federal Cabinet and was widely expected to be implemented this year. Instead, the CRTC arbitrarily and completely reversed the 2019 Rates Order, a decision that harms competition, reduces customer choice, and ignores the real and urgent need for affordable internet in Canada.

Not only do rural and remote communities continue to struggle to gain access to affordable broadband internet, the digital divide and lack of affordability remain an issue across all communities in Ontario, and Canada. For example, [a recent report by the Brookfield Institute at Ryerson University](#) found that more than a third of households in Toronto are worried about paying their home internet bills over the next few months. More than half of the city's low-income households also have download speeds below the national target of 50 megabits per second. Many rural and remote communities don't have access to broadband, or any internet services, at all. This would be problematic in the best of times, but is even more so now as the pandemic has made high-speed, affordable internet a necessity for education, work, and health care.

[A 2020 price study prepared by Wall Communications Inc.](#) for ISED found that internet prices increased across all service baskets over 2019, making Canada an international outlier among its peer countries. Without intervention from the federal government, who in 2019 promised to reduce internet prices for all Canadians, there is no doubt that this trend will continue.

The Federal Cabinet must overturn the decision now to ensure that affordable internet becomes a reality, not just an ideal. We are sharing this letter and Council resolution with representatives of, and leaders in, communities across Canada. We urge you and them to make this important issue your own, as it directly affects the people in their regions, and across Canada. As you all know, internet is now a necessary utility to all Canadians similar to gas, hydro, water and electricity. The CRTC decision has impacted over 1,200 small ISP's across Canada, thousands of jobs in your communities and negatively impacts millions of Canadians ability to receive affordable internet.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this critical issue with you at your earliest convenience, and to work together in making our concerns heard in support of affordable internet for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Canniff', written over a horizontal line.

Darrin Canniff, Mayor/CEO
Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Attachment: Council Resolution Supporting Affordable Internet

C: (via email)
Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Dave Epp, MP, Chatham-Kent-Leamington
Lianne Rood, MP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex
Rick Nicholls, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Leamington
Monte McNaughton, MPP, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
All Ontario Municipalities

Whereas internet connectivity is a basic necessity and essential utility for the vast majority of Canadians;

Whereas too many Canadians struggle to afford reliable, high-speed internet services, or do not have access to broadband internet at all;

Whereas the need for high-speed and affordable internet is always critical, but is even more so now as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown it is required for education, work, and health care;

Whereas independent studies have consistently shown that Canadians pay some of the highest prices for internet in the world and that internet prices have increased year over year;

Whereas the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) 2019 Rates Order set wholesale internet prices that would facilitate greater competition and promote innovative broadband services and more affordable prices for consumers;

Whereas the 2019 Rates Order was based on a rigorous, evidence-based, 4-year long regulatory process, and was upheld on appeal by unanimous decision of the Federal Court of Appeal, while the Supreme Court of Canada and the Federal Cabinet declined to review it;

Whereas on May 27, 2021, the CRTC decided to reverse its 2019 Rates Order, effectively guaranteeing that internet prices will continue to rise for consumers;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Municipality of Chatham-Kent call on the Federal Cabinet, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and ISED Minister Francois-Phillippe Champagne to overrule the CRTC's reversal and immediately implement the evidence-based 2019 Rates Order.

Be it further resolved that the Premier of Ontario, Ontario Minister of Industry, local MPPs, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, all 444 Ontario municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities be sent correspondence of Council's resolution along with the attached letter.