

King Chamber of Commerce Rural Broadband Position Statement

On behalf of the King Chamber of Commerce, I am writing with an open letter of support for the proposed rural broadband initiative.

As the voice of business in King Township, we generally advocate for open markets where competition provides variety and allows broad customer choice. However, as economists have long noted, there are instances where an open market does not lead to a market solution that provides sufficient choice for consumers.

Governments in Canada have a long history of providing the basic infrastructure required to encourage market participants to provide greater choice in under serviced areas. Previous large-scale government interventions and initiatives include the construction of the trans-Canada railway, the platform on which this country was founded 150 years ago, and the infrastructure supporting rural telephone service implemented a generation ago. Broadband quite simply is to the 21st century what railways were to the 19th century; and what telephone lines were to the 20th. All were/are key facilitators of commerce.

Having high speed internet connectivity in King will help with our local business sustainability. We seek to build a sustainable, wholesome community where future generations can live, work, and play in the township in which they were raised. Local work opportunities are key to this balance. Unfortunately, a rural environment does not readily lend itself to a market solution to providing high speed broadband connectivity to the community. This is most easily evidenced by our current lack of service despite our proximity to the many urban communities surrounding us who have had this service for any number of years.

While we live in the large region of York, King is a very rural place; even our settlement areas are well distributed with quite some distance between King City, Nobleton, and Schomberg. The York wide rural broadband initiative will provide an open access which market participants will use to provide choice. This initiative, if approved, will create an attractive cost-benefit opportunity for potential internet service providers to the community, even though a single provider may not have a compelling business case to build the infrastructure required to provide this service on their own.

We have a few hundred medium sized employers, a few hundred small businesses and over a thousand home-based businesses widely distributed across our rural landscape. Having the availability of high-speed internet access is an enabler for all these businesses and is critical to their future success. Let us provide our existing businesses with the tools they require to facilitate their long term sustainability.

Further, when thinking about entrepreneurs in internet based businesses who have the whole world from which to choose an operating location, we want them to consider King (which means York Region, the Province of Ontario, here in Canada) as a destination of choice for locating their business. Let us enable them to choose to settle here, hire local people and fuel the local economy.

On behalf of the business community in King Township, we sincerely appreciate your careful consideration of this letter of support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Allen", is placed above the typed name.

Tom Allen
President, King Chamber of Commerce