

**House of Commons**

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**Charlie Angus**

Member of Parliament for Timmins - James Bay  
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The Honourable Navdeep Bains  
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development  
Suite 356, Confederation Building  
House of Commons  
Fax: 343-291-2511

July 4, 2016

RE: Rural Broadband Investments in Northern Ontario

Dear Mr. Bains,

Broadband connectivity is a key factor in ensuring economic growth in Northern Ontario. And yet, I have been growing increasingly alarmed that Fed Nor has rejected a whole series of northern broadband projects. After looking into the matter further, I learned that all broadband projects for the north have been rejected with the claim that the applicants must start the process over by applying to the Connecting Canadians Program. This means that projects that should have been getting off the ground this year are being delayed for two years. As well, matching provincial funding for these projects are being put at risk.

Further, it appears that the Connecting Canadians program itself has seen significant troubles. Of the 101 approved agreements, 31 projects still need contribution agreements to be signed. It is even more worrisome that of the 81.2 million dollars budgeted last year for the program, only 66.9 million was spent. These are dollars that could have been allocated to the denied projects in Northern Ontario, but are now being returned to Treasury Board. This is hardly the way to help build a northern economy.

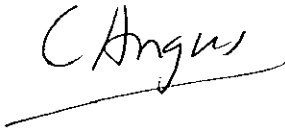
Investing in broadband is essential in bringing our economies into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in rural communities where deteriorating transportation infrastructure leaves us even more isolated within a globalized economy. It is unacceptable that every single one of our regional applications will be shut out of investments in broadband for two years.

I have written to you in the past about the distinct economic, logistical and social issues that separate the communities of Northern Ontario from the urban/suburban south. It is vital that we have a champion within your department and at cabinet to speak up for the distinct needs of the region. The decision to walk away on rural connectivity for the north is a signal that this sensitivity to the northern reality is still lacking in the new government's approach.

If FedNor is no longer able to fund broadband investments, then at minimum the government should bridge these applications to the Connecting Canadians program so that neither these applications nor our region are unfairly penalized.

I am asking you to look into this matter to ensure that the interests of Northern Ontario are fairly represented both in your department and at cabinet.

With greatest respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Angus". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Charlie Angus  
MP Timmins-James Bay