SWIFT

SouthWestern • Integrated • Fibre • Technology

Ultra-high-speed fibre broadband for everyone.

The Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) project is a forward-looking plan to help the region compete, connect and keep pace in a digital world.

Created by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC), it aims to deliver ultra-high-speed fibre broadband across southwestern Ontario.

Why SWIFT?

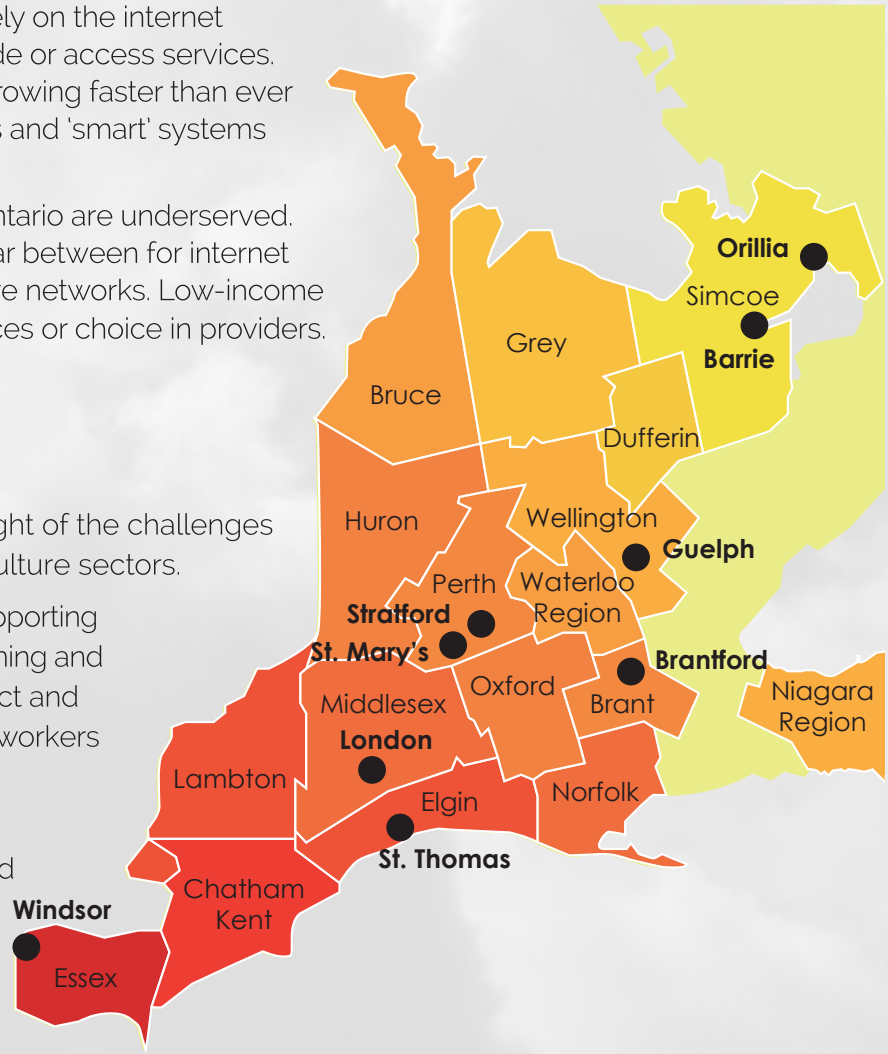
People, businesses and governments all rely on the internet to connect, conduct business and to provide or access services. Demand for speed and service quality is growing faster than ever imagined, driven by open data applications and 'smart' systems that connect people, places and things.

But many communities in southwestern Ontario are underserved. In rural areas, customers are too few and far between for internet service providers (ISPs) to invest in new fibre networks. Low-income urban neighbourhoods can also lack services or choice in providers.

Supporting economic growth and improved services

An ultra-high-speed fibre network will:

- Help retool the regional economy in light of the challenges faced by the manufacturing and agriculture sectors.
- Improve workforce development by supporting and enhancing education, distance learning and re-training programs. This will help attract and retain young workers and help mature workers find new opportunities.
- Make public services easier to access and more efficient, from healthcare and education to basic government services. This will improve quality and reduce the cost to reach rural communities with low population densities and reduce pressure on services in urban communities.



How will SWIFT expand ultra-high-speed fibre broadband?

Across Canada, communities and governments have recognized that the market alone has not and will not meet broadband demand – especially in underserved regions.

SWIFT has a long-term plan to build a future-proof network

SWIFT will enable creation of an extensive fibre network that connects the entire region with 1G service, using a combination of public and private funding, including:

- Public funding to address the gaps in broadband infrastructure by building on and expanding the reach of existing fibre. This will make it easier for ISPs to connect homes and businesses to ultra-high-speed internet.
- Public dollars matched with private investment from ISPs, who will continue to own and operate their networks and deliver services directly to customers.
- All ISPs will have equal access to the fibre network, leveling the playing field and creating a more competitive marketplace that will better serve urban and rural communities.

Who's involved?

SWIFT was conceived by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, which represents 15 upper and single-tier municipalities in southwestern Ontario, with more than three million residents. In addition to members of the WOWC, the Region of Niagara and the Region of Waterloo are included in the project. In addition, SWIFT has received support from the separated cities of Orillia and Stratford, school boards, colleges, universities and the health care sector. SWIFT is seeking to work closely with First Nations communities in southwestern Ontario to make sure that they too benefit from the project.

> "SWIFT offers an innovative, realistic and strong business model."
>
> - Dr. Reza Rajabiun, a Ryerson University researcher with national expertise in broadband infrastructure and competition policy.
>
> Dr. Rajabiun's independent third-party review, including a detailed analysis of the business model and financial data, endorsed SWIFT's approach to building and funding the network.

The SWIFT Model

The total cost of the project is estimated at $287 million. SWIFT has been working with the federal and provincial governments to secure about $189 million for the project. The municipal sector will commit $18 million and private sector investment is expected to be $80 million.

As the network is built, a dedicated ongoing service fee will be reinvested into expanding fibre connectivity to everyone. This will help the region keep pace with ever-changing demand and needs.

What's next?

SWIFT is working to secure federal and provincial partnership as a first step before issuing a Request for Information, which will help identify exactly where the gaps exist in fibre infrastructure. This would be followed by a Request for Proposal process for the first phase of the build, with the aim of beginning construction by the end of 2016 or early 2017.