

July 3, 2024

Attention: Municipal CAOs and staff

Subject: Possible Increased Permit Requests from Internet Service Providers through the Accelerated High Speed Internet Program

EORN is reaching out to inform you about continued development that may impact your municipality in the coming months. As you are aware, the Accelerated High Speed Internet Program (AHSIP), funded by the province, is currently underway with an ambitious goal of completing all projects by December 2025. This program aims to enhance high-speed internet access across eastern Ontario, necessitating a significant number of infrastructure projects.

As Internet Service Providers (ISPs) ramp up their efforts to meet this deadline, we anticipate a substantial increase in permit requests submitted to your municipality. The volume of these requests is expected to grow rapidly, which may place considerable pressure on your staff resources and impact the timely processing of permits. With fibre deployment ISPs will either need to hang the fibre on existing utility poles or bury the fibre. There are potentially thousands of kilometers of fibre, that if buried will require permitting from municipalities.

Given the tight project timeline, EORN recommends your municipality to consider measures to expedite the permit approval process as this is a requirement of the program. Here are a few recommendations to help manage the increased demand and ensure municipalities are prepared to meet their requirements directed by the province, to allow for the implementation of this critical infrastructure project:

1. **Expedited Permit Processing:** Implement processes to prioritize and expedite permit applications related to the AHSIP projects. Streamlining procedures and reducing delays will be crucial in meeting the December 2025 deadline.
2. **Utilize Automated Permitting Platforms:** We recommend leveraging either the One Window Broadband Window provided by the province for the program or EORN's Permit Central. Both systems are a centralized platform designed to facilitate and streamline the permit application process. This tool can help manage the increased workload more efficiently and ensure timely approvals. Both platforms aid in monitoring the progress of permit applications and identify potential challenges. Regular reporting on permit status can help keep all stakeholders informed and ensure accountability.

3. Adoption of Municipal Access Agreement Lite: EORN has worked closely with a consulting firm on the creation of a municipal access agreement lite agreement for municipalities to use with ISPs to assist in expediting the process of negotiating this legal document.
4. Staff Augmentation and Training: Consider reallocating existing resources to manage the influx of permit requests or contracting services for the processing of the permitting requests. Providing specialized training on AHSIP-related requirements will also help improve the accuracy and speed of permit processing. Training on both automated permitting platforms is available. In extreme cases there may be a requirement for additional staff to be hired.
5. Collaboration with ISPs: Establish clear communication channels with ISPs to ensure that permit applications are complete and accurate upon submission. Regular coordination meetings can help address any issues promptly and keep projects on track.

EORN recognizes that this increased demand for permits presents a significant challenge, but it also offers an opportunity to greatly enhance the connectivity and economic development of our region. Your cooperation and proactive measures will be instrumental in the success of the AHSIP.

Should you have any questions or require further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. We are committed to supporting your municipality throughout this process and are here to assist in any way we can.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your continued collaboration and support.

Sincerely,



Jason St. Pierre,
EORN Chief Executive Officer

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