

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Simcoe County Connects**

### **Rural Connections Program will enhance Internet Service across region**

**Midhurst/ December 16, 2009** – The County of Simcoe, together with municipal partners, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and Bell Aliant, has launched an initiative to bring reliable, high speed Internet service to rural communities across the region.

Rural Connections Broadband Program (Rural Connections) is a program designed to reduce broadband infrastructure gaps in rural southern Ontario. Broadband, also known as high-speed Internet, combines telecommunications infrastructure and service, allowing end-users to use the Internet at speeds far greater than traditional dial-up service allows.

“Faster, more reliable Internet access will stimulate the economy of Simcoe County and serve as a catalyst for bringing new business to the region and creating jobs in our towns and rural communities,” stated Warden Cal Patterson. “We need to provide access to high speed Internet in our rural communities so they can compete both nationally and internationally.”

The County of Simcoe was awarded \$1 million under the provincial government’s Rural Connections program in December, 2008. Bell Aliant has invested \$2.6 million and the County’s funding contribution is \$80,000. The first phase of the Rural Connections wireless infrastructure deployment project is now complete and it is expected that service enhancements will be completed by April, 2010, making high speed Internet service available to 95 per cent of residents and businesses.

Warden Patterson attended the official launch ceremony and information session on Tuesday, Dec. 15 at the RecPlex in Wasaga Beach. Public information sessions were also held on Wednesday, Dec. 16 at the Coldwater & District Community Centre in Coldwater from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and at the Thornton Arena in Thornton from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

“A reliable high-speed broadband network is an important infrastructure asset for our residents and the County is grateful to the provincial government and Bell Aliant for their tremendous financial support for this project,” concluded Warden Patterson.

The County of Simcoe is composed of sixteen member municipalities and provides crucial public services to County residents in addition to providing paramedic and social services to the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. Visit our website at [simcoe.ca](http://simcoe.ca).

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Mariane McLeod from 97.7 The Beach FM, County of Simcoe Warden Cal Patterson, Chris Belanger from Bell Aliant and Brian Smith, Director of Information Technology with the County of Simcoe joined together to celebrate the official launch of Rural Connections in Simcoe County.