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PRESS RELEASE
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High speed Internet The MRC d'Argenteuil submits a memoir to the CRTC and urges governments to act

Lachute, May 13th, 2020 – On May 7th, 2020, the MRC d'Argenteuil submitted a memoir informing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) of the current situation regarding the deployment of a fiber optic network to 4,260 households in its territory. Highly concerned by the issue of access to adequate Internet connectivity and driven by the urgency to act, particularly in the context of the current health crisis, the MRC d'Argenteuil Council is asking the Québec government, the Canadian government and the CRTC to put immediate pressure on the managers and owners of support structures to accelerate the completion of this project, which is now more essential than ever.

Although every effort is being made to complete the *Québec branché* (provincial government) and *Connect to Innovate* (federal government) projects within the timeframe initially planned when funding totalling \$9.3 million was obtained in 2017, several obstacles related to the process of obtaining permits from the main telecommunications carriers are slowing the project down. This problem is of great concern to the MRC d'Argenteuil, which unfortunately has no control over the delays in obtaining permits. Like many MRCs that have obtained government funding, the MRC d'Argenteuil is in a very vulnerable position with respect to the companies that own or manage the support structures.

“The MRC d'Argenteuil believes that the only way to meet its commitment to provide high speed fiber optic Internet service to 4,260 households in its territory by March 31st, 2021, in accordance with the terms of the funding obtained, is for the governments of Canada and Québec and the CRTC to force owners of support structures to show good faith and flexibility and to collaborate in a respectful and diligent manner with municipalities and MRCs which, it must be remembered, are local governments serving the population and the common good”, said MRC warden Scott Pearce.

Issues intensified by the current context

The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the absolute necessity for all citizens to have immediate access to effective, high-performing Internet service for purposes such as teleworking, distance learning, e-commerce, and socialization. The MRC d'Argenteuil believes that this service, which is essential and

strategic for economic, social and cultural development, education, health, public safety and dynamic land occupancy, must be among the infrastructure works to be prioritized by the governments of Québec and Canada. As such, it fully supports the Fédération québécoise des municipalités (FQM) in its efforts to urge the Government of Québec to identify the deployment of high speed Internet as a top priority infrastructure requiring accelerated action, in order to give the economy the boost it needs during and after the health crisis.

The memoir

In its memoir, the MRC d'Argenteuil sets out its argument by first detailing the problems encountered, then presenting the negative impacts generated, and finally proposing possible solutions to streamline the processing of permit applications for access to support structures. The memoir is currently available online on the MRC website: argenteuil.qc.ca and the CRTC website: services.crtc.gc.ca.

Since January 2019, the MRC d'Argenteuil has been vigorously denouncing the issues of access and permit acquisition and is increasing the number of actions taken with various authorities to quickly remedy the situation. The submission of this memoir is one of those actions, which also include political lobbying, seizing media opportunities, and documenting case studies and possible solutions in collaboration with other MRCs.

High speed Internet – Current situation

The MRC d'Argenteuil has 19,000 households in 9 local municipalities. 8,000 households, or 45%, do not have access to high speed Internet service. As the local government, the MRC is currently conducting the first phase of a large-scale fibre optic deployment project, with total costs estimated at \$11.7 million. This project, which is carried out jointly with the non-profit organization Fibre Argenteuil Inc., covers 355 kilometres in rural areas and will be made possible by government funding totalling \$9.3 million and the injection of the substantial sum of \$2.4 million by the MRC d'Argenteuil. The MRC's overall objective is to provide Internet connectivity for the entire Argenteuil population.

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Source: MRC d'Argenteuil

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