

DOUG COLLINS  
9TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA



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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1009

February 10, 2016

Mr. Tony Thomas  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Windstream  
4001 Rodney Parham Road  
Little Rock, AR 72212

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I am writing to you in regards to the hundreds upon hundreds of complaints my Congressional office has received regarding virtually every aspect of Windstream's conduct in Northeast Georgia. While I firmly support free enterprise and believe the Federal Government's role should be limited, the nature and consistency of the reports I have received leave me no choice but to write to you directly. Since elected to Congress, I've tried to work closely with your staff, sharing with them the nature of the complaints and urging their swift resolution. But over the past three years, the voices of my constituents and the appalling reports of your company's behavior have only increased in volume and quantity. It's time for Windstream to take my concerns, and those of your Northeast Georgia customers, seriously.

Although Windstream is a private company, the telecommunications industry is both heavily regulated by the federal government and significantly dependent on federal grants and other forms of funding. Given these facts, Congressional oversight of your company's actions in Northeast Georgia is more than merited. And I believe, compelled. I have no doubt this letter will go unheeded, as the complaints of thousands of your customers have also gone unheeded. But I was sent to Washington, D.C. to represent the hard working families in Northeast Georgia, and I will continue to persist until we reach resolution.

As I'm sure you are aware, I've previously written to Chairman Wheeler with the Federal Communications Commission about Windstream's acceptance of Phase II Connect America Funds and your lack of demonstrated ability to meet the upcoming benchmarks. In addition to the concerns I expressed in that letter, and shared with your staff, there have arisen several other areas of concern that I respectfully request you review and supply a response to me in a timely fashion. If you seek additional clarification to any of these questions, I encourage you



to reach out to me directly, or my staff. I will, of course, be sharing this letter and your response to the thousands of frustrated and angry Windstream subscribers in Northeast Georgia.

1. I am concerned that your networks in Northeast Georgia are at over-capacity. Would you agree with this assessment? If not, please provide documentation demonstrating that Northeast Georgia networks specifically are not operating at over-capacity. If they are, please outline your plan to address this situation.
2. Please provide a detailed status update regarding Windstream's progress upgrading your copper networks to modern fiber in Northeast Georgia. Specifically, what percentage of the copper network has been replaced and what is the timeline for full replacement with modern fiber?
3. Of the fees that you currently collect from Windstream subscribers in Northeast Georgia, what percentage are being used to upgrade infrastructure in the same area as those subscribers reside?
4. In 2014, Windstream was granted by the Internal Revenue Service Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) status. Based on media reports at the time, Windstream's tax savings from this change in status was estimated to cut your company debt by \$3.2 billion and produce \$115 million annually in free cash flow. What is your estimated tax savings to date from REIT status, and what percentage of that estimated savings have you invested in broadband upgrades, both nationally and specifically in Georgia.

I appreciate your review of these questions and I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Doug Collins

Member of Congress

