



Committee Report

To:	Warden McQueen and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	June 25, 2020
Subject / Report No:	CAOR-CW-11-20
Title:	SWIFT 2.0
Prepared by:	Kim Wingrove, CAO
Reviewed by:	
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW125-20; Endorsed by County Council July 9, 2020 per Resolution CC63-20

Recommendation

1. That Report CAOR-CW-11-20 SWIFT 2.0 be received; and
2. That the County of Grey submit letters requesting broadband funding for Southwestern Ontario to the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission's Broadband Fund and Industry Science and Economic Development's Universal Broadband Fund.

Executive Summary

This report is to present the details of the special meeting of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus called on Thursday, June 4, 2020. Recommendations supported at that meeting include approval of a SWIFT 2.0 model and for advocacy in support of receiving SWIFT 2.0 funding, funding to complete the remaining SWIFT 1.0 projects, as well as southwestern Ontario's population based proportionate share of the CRTC's \$750M Broadband Fund and Industry, Science and Economic Development's \$1.7B Universal Broadband Fund.

Background and Discussion

Funding from both the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada is urgently needed to address our region's large connectivity gaps, so that we can close the digital divide. The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus supports the funding of SWIFT as

Southwestern Ontario's mechanism to advance the expansion of critical broadband infrastructure across the region. The model works, it delivers results and can be immediately leveraged to upgrade networks and coverage in our region's underserved areas. COVID -19 has underscored the urgency to address gaps in broadband services across our region.

At its meeting held on Thursday, June 4, 2020, the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus reviewed a set of recommendations for the future of the WOWC's investments in high-speed, fibre internet access. David Mayberry, Chair, SWIFT Board of Directors and Barry Field, Executive Director, SWIFT provided an update on the current SWIFT program and presented recommendations on how SWIFT 2.0 should be structured and funded. Accompanying this report is the presentation that was provided to the members of the WOWC.

The attached minutes detail the meeting, including the six recommendations that were approved. A summary is below.

SWIFT 2.0

The Caucus was presented with five options to consider regarding future investment in fibre internet infrastructure. Option 1 was not to consider pursuing broadband funding and drop this from the Caucus mandate. Options 2, 3 and 4 included each municipality pursuing funding individually, pursuing funding as a group and then executing individual projects or designing projects and procuring an ISP to build.

SWIFT 2.0 sees WOWC pursuing funding and executing \$500M worth of projects under the SWIFT model. The focus would be on fibre installation rather than wireless, and a target of unserved areas to serve at a maximum of medium density areas or about 15 premises/km. The average density of unserved premises in Grey is 5.4/km. The federal and provincial governments would be requested to provide \$367M with the municipalities responsible for \$50M in project spend and \$10M in project administration.

SWIFT 2.0 would increase the subsidy available to ISPs to complete construction to 83% from the current 67% of project costs. The ISPs would contribute about \$83M in project funding under the proposed model. Grey County's share of project costs and admin fees would total \$4,257,565 to install 549 km of fibre for a total project spend of \$36,228,263.

Beyond the request for \$500M in SWIFT 2.0 funding, WOWC will request \$44M to complete the remaining unfunded SWIFT 1.0 projects. This would include \$5,873,841 worth of work in Grey County.

CRTC and ISED Program Requests

In addition to the decision to support SWIFT 2.0, the WOWC have a plan to advocate for our region's fair share of CRTC's \$750M Broadband Fund. WOWC and our Member Counties and local municipalities should be advocating for 10% (or \$75M) of the funding as the region represents 10% of the population of Canada. WOWC must also advocate for the region's fair share of Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) \$1.7B Universal Broadband Fund. Applications are opening this year and WOWC should once again be advocating for 10% (or \$170M) for Southwestern Ontario based on population.

This advocacy is above and beyond SWIFT funding requests. Southwestern Ontario was left out of the last round of Connect to Innovate (CTI) funding. In order to ensure that the region and its fifteen Member Counties and local municipalities receive their fair share of available new funding, members are requested to support advocacy efforts by sending the letters attached to this report, one to the CEO of CRTC and the other to the Hon. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

None with this report.

Financial and Resource Implications

None with this report. Should WOWC and SWIFT be successful in securing funding for new broadband investments, staff would bring forward a report with details to enable Grey County Council to consider the scope of their participation in new projects.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal (list)
- External: Barry Field, SWIFT, Western Ontario Wardens Caucus

Appendices and Attachments

[Attachment 1: Draft mins - WOWC \(Electronic\) - June 4, 2020](#)

[Attachment 2: SWIFT 2.0 Presentation June 4 2020](#)

[Attachment 3: CRTC Letter](#)

[Attachment 4: ISED Letter](#)