

Report ITR-CS-08-15

To: Chair Bob Pringle and Members of Corporate Services Committee
From: Geoff Hogan, Information Technology (IT) Director
Meeting Date: May 26, 2015
Subject: **SWIFT Network Funding Update**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CS61-15; Endorsed by County Council June 2, 2015 per Resolution CC78-15;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS the 2015 approved budget included \$216,000 for the South West Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) project;

AND WHEREAS the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus (WOWC) requires a draw of \$20,000 to continue activities to get the project funded;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT report ITR-CS-08-15 be received;

AND THAT Grey County continues to fully support the SWIFT project and forwards the requested payment of \$20,000 to the WOWC.

Background

Grey County has been a strong supporter of the WOWC's SWIFT project. SWIFT is a \$245M project that will bring fibre based ultra-broadband to all of southwest Ontario. As part of the \$16M municipal contribution to SWIFT Grey County has pledged \$216,000 per year for five years in support of the SWIFT project.

In the [attached letter](#), SWIFT has requested an interim payment of \$20,000 from Grey County so SWIFT is able to complete additional technical and outreach work requested by the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure (MEDEI). SWIFT staff are hoping that all the requirements for MEDEI will be met by mid-summer 2015. The hope is that a funding announcement will come when all the MEDEI requirements have been satisfied.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology (IT)

Considerations

The 2015 approved Grey County budget includes \$216,000 for SWIFT.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Support of the WOWC project is contiguous with goal 4.5 of the Corporate Strategic plan: Champion a broadband initiative for Western Ontario that will improve telecommunications in underserved areas, thereby improving connections to services and economic opportunities within Grey County and the region.

This initiative supports Council's overarching goal of expanding the prosperity base (Goal 1) as reliable high speed internet access is crucial to the success of businesses.

Attachments

[SWIFT Interim Payment request letter](#)

May 1, 2015

Dear WOWC Members and Colleagues,

The SWIFT project is making good progress and we are seeing increasing interest and support from both inside and outside the WOWC region. The project has not yet received funding from the provincial and federal governments but discussions are ongoing and continue to be positive. There is a requirement to continue with both technical and outreach work from now until the time the project is funded. Unfortunately, the funds currently available to the SWIFT project is not sufficient to cover this work.

On the technical side the project team has been requested to provide additional information to MEDEI with respect to the funding application that is currently being reviewed. Minister Duguid indicates in a recent letter that he sees great potential in the project and believes it can provide significant economic benefit to Southwestern Ontario. He identifies a number of areas requiring more detailed analysis. This is in line with what was required for the Eastern Ontario Regional Network project and is reasonable.

From an outreach perspective, the SWIFT Steering Committee, made up of representatives from each WOWC member, identified the need for a more detailed and comprehensive communications strategy. This strategy needs to target all stakeholders to ensure everyone is receiving a clear and standardized message about the value of the project.

To ensure sufficient funds are available to move the project forward and to complete the additional technical and outreach work, I am requesting each WOWC member forward \$20,000 of the 2015 SWIFT project contribution as soon as possible. This is not an additional amount but an interim payment. I know many municipalities have included funds in the 2015 budget but are waiting to release them until the business plan is available for review. The additional technical and outreach work will help complete the business plan and assist the Province with the funding application decision.

Respectfully submitted by,

Geoff Hogan
Director of Information Technology