

## Report ITR-PCD-05-14

**To:** Chair Arlene Wright and Members of Planning and Community Development Committee  
**From:** Geoff Hogan, Information Technology (IT) Director  
**Meeting Date:** October 16, 2014  
**Subject:** **Intelligent County and Local Broadband**  
**Status:** Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution PCD108-14; Endorsed by County Council November 25, 2014 per Resolution CC163-14;

### Recommendation(s)

**WHEREAS encouraging diversification of local and regional economies through the increased use of broadband and information and communications technologies (ICT) is an essential component of developing a knowledge-based economy;**

**AND WHEREAS leveraging high speed, high capacity communications technologies (broadband) across a wide range of sectors achieves above average rates of economic growth, job creation, social diversification and environmental innovation;**

**AND WHEREAS the lack of affordable high quality broadband is impeding Grey County residents and businesses ability to fully take advantage of the new economy;**

**AND WHEREAS initial results of the County's Economic Development Action Plan indicate that the implementation of high quality broadband needs to be a priority of Grey County;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT report ITR-PCD-05-14 be received;**

**AND THAT the community engagement facilitating an Intelligent Community in Grey County be continued;**

**AND FURTHER THAT a plan be drafted and brought forward for the incoming Council's consideration to have the County facilitate broadband construction in Grey County;**

**AND FURTHER THAT the plans be included in the 2015 budget deliberations.**

## Background

In order to be viable and prosper in today's global economy, communities and regions must compete for investment on the global stage, and its communities must have the tools to grow their economies from within. It is the ability of business and government to adapt and innovate the skills and creativity of the local labour force, and it is the availability of high capacity broadband access to the Internet that now powers wealth creation, entrepreneurial activity, job creation and overall community prosperity.

The demand for more robust Internet service is increasing dramatically, as more and more people become aware of and reliant on Internet-based services and information. Continued innovations in e-health, e-government, e-commerce and entertainment are extending the societal reach of and dependence on the Internet and this in turn is fueling an unprecedented revolution in how we all live, work and play.

Worldwide experience shows that the extension of ultra-high speed broadband to as much of the population as possible reaps significant and measurable economic and social benefits. Communities that connect to and embrace the so-called Internet of Things are rewarded with many so called 'Intelligent' outcomes and attributes (as reported by the [Intelligent Community Forum](#)).

### *Success Factors*

The five key success factors for an Intelligent Community or region are<sup>1</sup>:

#### *1. Broadband Connectivity*

Broadband is the new essential utility, as vital to economic growth as clean water and good roads. Communities need a clear vision of their broadband future and to craft policies to encourage deployment and adoption.

#### *2. Knowledge Workforce*

A knowledge workforce is a labour force that creates economic value through the acquisition, processing and use of information.

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<sup>1</sup> Intelligent Community Forum

### 3. *Digital Inclusion*

As broadband deploys widely through a community, there is serious risk that it will worsen the exclusion of people who already play a peripheral role in the economy and society, whether due to poverty, lack of skills, prejudice or geography.

Communities need to promote digital inclusion by creating policies and funding programs that provide marginalized members of the community with access to digital technology and broadband, by providing skills training and by promoting a compelling vision of the benefits of engaging in the broadband economy.

### 4. *Innovation*

Broadband is to innovation what fertilizer is to crops. Competitive communities work to build the local innovation capacity of new companies and entrepreneurs, recognizing that private sector investment is what generates wealth and produces job growth in modern economies. Failure to innovate means failure to compete.

### 5. *Marketing and Advocacy*

Like businesses facing greater global competition, communities must work harder than ever to communicate their advantages and explain how they are maintaining or improving their position as wonderful places to live, work and invest in growth businesses. Effective marketing shares this story with the world, while advocacy builds a new vision of the community from within.

## *Work to Date*

Grey County Council allocated \$100,000 to explore an Intelligent County initiative. To date the following activities have occurred:

1. Completed the I-Canada iCat assessment (details in [CAOR-PCD-14-12](#))
2. Completed Cisco's Smart and Connected Communities (S+CC) benchmarking in conjunction with the Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA) Intelligent Region Project (details in [ITR-PCD-01-14](#))
3. Worked closely with the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus' South West Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) project
4. Hosted a keynote talk featuring Robert Bell, one of the co-founders of the Intelligent Community Forum (ICF)
5. Hosting one of SWEA's Community Engagement Coordinators (CEC) to gather data for SWEA's regional benchmarking project (August 2014 – March 2015)
6. Hosting an ICF master class with Robert Bell of the ICF (occurring at the Falls Inn on Nov 7, 2014) – for details on the master class see [ITR-PCD-01-14](#)

## *The Way Forward*

When the master class is completed the following outcomes are expected:

- Shared understanding of 21st Century economic and social development
- Recognition of core challenges and the impact they have on every constituency
- Definition of potential projects that engage group members in creating positive change
- Identification of champions interested in taking projects from concept to results

The master class will likely identify a number of areas that the project can focus on in the future that will help move the community toward becoming more 'Intelligent' but a certain outcome will be that broadband access is not yet adequate in most areas of Grey County. The project activities to date, the ICF success factors and the SWIFT project's feasibility study all identify that high quality broadband is a critically enabling infrastructure for our community.

If Grey County is to survive and thrive in the future knowledge based economy broadband access must be improved. A long term vision that aligns with the regional SWIFT project's plan must be created to increase the quantity and quality of private sector broadband investments in our community.

A recent draft of the county's upcoming economic development strategy indicated that broadband is critical to the future economic health of our county. The consultants comment on broadband was simple, "get it".

The regional WOWC SWIFT project will bring the fast, highly available, fibre based broadband service to between 10 and 20 Points of Presence (POP) across Grey County. SWIFT is a long term solution to building world class fibre based broadband access in our region but it will take time. To speed up the process of encouraging last mile access improvements for Grey County residents and business the county needs to get directly involved in local broadband projects. If the county relies on the SWIFT project alone to address broadband deficiencies county residents and businesses will wait between 5-20 years as the projections for completion of SWIFT (fibre to every home and business) vision is far off in the future.

Staff are engaging a consultant this fall to provide options for mechanisms to improve access in our area that will be ready to discuss when council reviews the 2015 budget.

## Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology (IT)

### Considerations

It is recommended that a plan be developed to work on local broadband construction that is aligned with the regional SWIFT project. The project team is looking for council direction on potential next steps. Once the options for improving access locally have been identified by the consultant, staff will be in a position to draft a report for the incoming council's consideration.

By calendar year end the project will have consumed around 70% of the initial \$100,000 budget. If council wishes to continue to facilitate a community engagement program to become an intelligent community a further investment in staff resources is required. Currently the only resource that works on this file is the IT Director and one day a week from one other staff. Funding is currently available to extend the current staffing support to the end of March 2015. It is understood that staffing beyond that will be subject to the plan being developed and budgetary approval by Council.

### Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Goal Number One of the Corporate Strategic Plan is to expand the prosperity base of the county. This means, enhancing and diversifying economic opportunities within the county, by becoming "investment- ready" and ensuring the foundation is in place for sustained success. Our shared vision of sustained community and regional prosperity encompasses:

#### *Economic Opportunity and Growth*

Wealth generation and the creation of work are the basic building blocks for livable, healthy communities where human initiative and stable families can flourish. Opportunities for entrepreneurial initiative, business expansion and training for jobs that offer upward mobility are critical to this success.

#### Community Sustainability

Communities that are vibrant, strong and offer hope to their residents are communities in which neighbourhoods are safe, the environment is clean, housing is affordable, social support services and cultural/recreational opportunities are accessible, and civic spirit is nurtured by participatory decision-making, innovative design and celebration.

#### Community Partnerships

Economic opportunity and social/cultural development rely on broad community participation, both at the individual level and at the institutional level. Engaged

individuals, governments and the private and not-for-profit sectors working together to provide relevant, accessible and coordinated programs and services that build towards the community's strategic direction.

The Intelligent Community program is wholly consistent with this strategic direction.

## Attachments

Background Reports:

[CAOR-PCD-14-12](#) - Towards an Intelligent Region

[ITR-PCD-01-14](#) – Intelligent County Initiative

Respectfully submitted by,

Geoff Hogan

Director of Information Technology