

Report ITR-PCD-03-16

To: Chair Paul McQueen and
Members of the Planning and Community Development Committee

From: Geoff Hogan, Director of Information Technology

Meeting Date: March 15, 2016

Subject: **Support of Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology Inc. (SWIFT) high speed broadband initiative**

Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution PCD50-16; Endorsed by County Council April 5, 2016 per Resolution CC46-16

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS Grey County has been providing ongoing financial and human resource support to the South West Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) high speed broadband initiative since its inception in 2012;

AND WHEREAS a new Not-For-Profit entity, Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology Inc. (SWIFT Inc.), has been incorporated by the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus (WOWC) to manage the SWIFT project;

AND WHEREAS Grey County council passed a resolution of support for the submission of an application for funding under the Small Communities Fund by the WOWC;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report ITR-PCD-03-16 be received;

AND THAT Grey County Council support the submission for an application of funding under the Small Communities Fund by SWIFT Inc. for funding to assist with the SWIFT high speed broadband initiative in south western Ontario.

Background

As noted in report CAOR-CC-07-14, the WOWC commissioned a study into the state of broadband service in Southwestern Ontario. The study found Southwestern Ontario to

be far behind other regions in Ontario, across Canada and around the world for availability of and access to affordable high capacity broadband internet service.

Grey County has provided staff resources to the WOWC project and has shown real leadership on the broadband file. The WOWC submitted an application to the Small Communities Fund requesting funding to implement a regional fibre optic network. One of the requirements of the application was a resolution of support of the project by a municipality. Grey County provided the resolution (ITR-CC-01-15) for the funding application in 2015.

The SWIFT project has grown beyond the geographic boundaries of the WOWC (Niagara Region and the Town of Caledon have joined). In response a new Not-For-Profit (Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology Inc.) has been incorporated to manage the project. The WOWC has a majority of the board seats on the new corporation. As a housekeeping measure a municipality must pass a motion supporting the new entity applying to the Small Communities Fund.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology

Considerations

There are no financial ramifications associated with providing written support of a funding application to SWIFT Inc.

If this application were to be successful, in order to access and leverage upper levels of government funding, financial contributions will be required. Grey County has budgeted to contribute \$216,000 annually for five years. This would provide a total contribution of \$1,080,000 over the life of the project.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Support of the WOWC / SWIFT funding application 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 property base (Goal 1) as reliable high speed internet access is crucial to the success of businesses.

Attachments

[ITR-CC-01-15 Support of Western Ontario Warden's Caucus \(WOWC\) South West Integrated Fibre Technology \(SWIFT\) Funding Application](#)

Respectfully submitted by,

Geoff Hogan

Director of Information Technology