 Committee Report

# Report ITR-CC-01-15

**To**: County Council

**From**: Geoff Hogan

**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, December 16, 2014

**Subject: Support of Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus Funding Application for South West Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) high speed broadband initiative**

**Status**: Recommendation adopted by County Council as presented per Resolution CC14-15;

## Recommendation(s)

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

**AND WHEREAS Grey County Council adopted Resolution CS98-14, strongly supporting the Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus (WOWC) funding application, which was endorsed at the November 25, 2014 session of Grey County Council;**

**AND WHEREAS within Resolution CS98-14 it was requested that the incoming Grey County Council also pass a resolution of support for the submission of an application of funding under the Small Communities Fund by the WOWC;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report ITR-CC-01-15 be received;**

**AND THAT Grey County Council support the submission of an application of funding under the Small Communities Fund by the WOWC for funding to assist with the South West Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) high speed broadband initiative.**

## 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.

Subsequently, the SWIFT project was initiated and managed by Grey County Director of Information Technology, Geoff Hogan and then Grey County CAO, Lance Thurston along with the firm of Campbell Patterson Communications. The steering committee was comprised of Duncan McKinlay, Past Warden, Grey County (Chair) as well as representatives from several municipal councils in Southwestern Ontario and industry representatives including The Southwest Economic Alliance, Middlesex Hospital Alliance, Universities of Windsor and Guelph, and the Waterloo Region District School Board. Financial and human resources support has been provided by Grey County toward this initiative since its onset.

The WOWC submitted an Expression of Interest for the Small Communities Fund requesting funding to implement a regional fibreoptic network. The attached response from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs advises that the project proposal has been selected to move forward to the application phase, the deadline for which is December 19, 2014 at 5:00 PM. One of the requirements of the application is a resolution of support of the project by a municipality.

## Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology Considerations

There are no financial ramifications associated with providing written support of a funding application to the Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus.

If this application were to be successful, in order to access and leverage upper levels of government funding, financial contributions will be required. While the WOWC has not established an official formula for municipal contributions, it has been suggested by the WOWC that Grey County, beginning in 2015, prepare for estimated annual contribution of $216,000. This would provide a total contribution of $1,080,000 over five years.

It is acknowledged that the WOWC’s SWIFT initiative is long term meaning as far out as 20 years and does not cover what is known as the last mile where the population densities are low and the rate of return on investment is also low. A study is currently being undertaken to determine how Grey County can move forward in a complimentary manner to facilitate a faster roll out within the county. A report will be brought forward for consideration early in 2015.

## Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Support of the WOWC 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

November 6, 2014 letter from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to the Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus.

[ITR-PCD-05-14 Intelligent County and Broadband Initiative](https://greydocs.ca/urm/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=GC_237669&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased)

[CAOR-CC-07-14 WOWC SWIFT Time Commitment](https://greydocs.ca/urm/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=GC_232268&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased)

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathie Nunno

Clerk’s Department

Geoff Hogan
Director of Information Technology

Director Sign Off: Geoff Hogan



