

Report ITR-CC-11-15

To: County Council
From: Geoff Hogan
Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2015
Subject: **Small Communities Fund Broadband Application**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Council as presented per Resolution CC127-15 September 1, 2015;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS Grey County has identified improved broadband as a goal in the Corporate Strategic Plan and the Made in Grey Economic Development Strategy;

AND WHEREAS County Council has set aside \$1,000,000 in a reserve specifically for broadband improvements;

AND WHEREAS the Small Communities Fund of the New Building Canada Fund has an intake closing on September 30, 2015;

AND WHEREAS Grey County has all the necessary resources in place to submit a fulsome application;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report ITR-CC-11-15 be received;

AND THAT Grey County Council support the submission of an application under the Small Communities Fund for funding to improve broadband connectivity in Grey County.

Background

Grey County Council has identified broadband infrastructure as an important strategic objective in both the Strategic Plan and the Made in Grey Economic Development Strategy. Grey County has provided both funding and resources to the regional SouthWest Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) network led by the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus (WOWC) that is currently working on a long term regional broadband strategy. SWIFT will provide vital, open access, regional connectivity and a long term funding mechanism for broadband connectivity. Due to the size and complexity of the SWIFT project it has a five year timeline for the first phase to become fully operational.

Recognizing the critical need for immediate improved broadband infrastructure in Grey County, Grey County Council has committed \$1,000,000 to a broadband reserve (additional to SWIFT commitments) to enable local broadband improvements. The New Building Canada Fund – Small Communities Fund (NBCF-SCF) is currently accepting expressions of interest for projects including broadband projects. With the commitment of \$1,000,000 Grey County can request \$3,500,000 each from the federal and provincial governments to build \$10,500,000 of fibre optic infrastructure as shown in Table 1.

Table 1:

Funding Source	Amount	Share
Federal (NBCF-SCF)	\$ 3,500,000.00	33%
Provincial (NBCF-SCF)	\$ 3,500,000.00	33%
Grey County	\$ 1,000,000.00	10%
Providers	\$ 2,500,000.00	24%
Total	\$ 10,500,000.00	100%

The timeline for the application is very tight. Expressions of Interest (EOI) are due September 30, 2015 and if the EOI is accepted by the Province a full application will be due in November or December. Grey County is well positioned to apply as a consultant has already been hired and a Request for Pre-Qualification (RFPQ) is being released this week to gather the information needed to provide a fulsome application if the EOI stage is passed.

At this point staff cannot provide an exact network plan as the data collected during the RFPQ stage will provide the data to create the plan. Broadly, the County and other select public sector organizations in Grey County (lower tiers, schools, etc.) will be connected to create a significant fibre footprint throughout the county so access to open access fibre backhaul will be available to private sector providers to connect residents and businesses.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology Considerations

\$1,000,000 in funding for the project is available in a reserve specifically earmarked for broadband. Funding for a consultant is in the approved 2015 budget and the consultant has already been hired and an RFPQ has been released to gather the information needed for the funding application.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Support of the 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.

Respectfully submitted by,

Geoff Hogan

Director of Information Technology