

Memorandum

Date: November 16, 2021

To: Members of Council

From: Erin Britnell, Director, Corporate Strategy & Innovation

Subject: Update on Broadband Work Plan

This memorandum is to provide supplementary information regarding the Broadband Capital Budget request 2022-126. There have been several initiatives completed under this work plan in 2021 including broadband installation, changes at the Federal and Provincial levels of government, a process review for Public Utilities work and the Internet Rebate program, updates on each initiative below.

Broadband Installation

Building is underway on the three projects awarded through SWIFT. All three projects are scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2022 and have indicated that they are on schedule. Some residents in the areas serviced by Vianet as part of these projects are already receiving service. These projects will bring Caledon up to approximately 80% of residents serviced by high speed internet.

Additionally, Bell Canada was awarded a contract through the Federal Government for the area around Campbell's Cross. These applications are in the permitting phase with connectivity expected in 2022 area residents. The Town is aware that Bell is looking to service other areas of Caledon including some areas around Palgrave in addition to the Campbell's Cross location, however they have not provided detailed maps to the Town to date or the approximate number of properties that it will service.

The Town is also working with Vianet to get the Trailway build underway. This work includes a shared build with Vianet and the Public Sector Network infrastructure which the Town relies on to connect public facilities. The end result will be the first section of the Trailway build for Vianet's backbone to be complete (Gore Rd. to Old Base Line in Inglewood) as well as connecting the Town's facilities in Inglewood to the Public Sector Network.

Early in 2021, the Town partnered on two applications and provided a third application a letter of support. These applications were submitted for Provincial and Federal funding. It was announced this summer that the Town would be receiving funding through these programs, but the specific details of which application was selected, and which areas would be funded has not been released since. Staff continue to advocate to both levels of government for the release of this funding.

Until these maps are provided to the Town, staff are unable to calculate the specific areas that will be remaining to be covered. Additionally, as outlined below, the Provincial government has made changes to how funding would be awarded that will impact the Town's next steps.

Changes at the Federal and Provincial Level

The largest changes to the broadband landscape occurred at the Provincial level in 2021. The Provincial government moved to a direct Request for Proposals process for underserved areas versus the previous grant process. This means that the Town's role shifts from direct funding to advocacy and coordination of the Public Utilities process. The regulations associated with the Building Broadband Faster Act and details of the specifics of the funding program have not yet been released. Once they have been released, staff are committed to re-evaluating the Broadband Levy based on how projects are awarded by the Provincial government to see if it is still required to meet the Town's broadband goals.

Both the Federal and Provincial governments have committed to ensuring all areas of the Province would be serviced by 2025.

Public Utilities Process Review

As part of the Broadband work at the Town, Internet Service Providers had identified that one of the barriers to doing work at the Town was the length of time it takes to get approvals to work on Town and Region roads. With the Provincial government's changing role and the impact of the Building Broadband Faster Act, the Town ability to expedite applications through the permitted processes will be critical to residents receiving access to infrastructure.

In 2021 the Town undertook a process review in 2021 to identify areas for improvement. Staff are currently exploring the following high-level changes to the process:

- Moving to allow Utilities to coordinate amongst themselves, similar to the Mississauga model, prior to approaching the Town for permissions and permits
- Establishing Municipal Access Agreements (MAAs) with Internet Service Providers that outlines roles and responsibilities from the beginning of the process
- As part of the MAA process, determining a streamlined way of collecting securities from the applicants than the current model of a set amount per road segment

Staff will be bringing forward a report in Q1, 2022 to outline in detail the proposed new process and any policy or fee changes that would be required to implement for Council's approval.

Internet Grant Program

The Internet Grant program, initiated by Council in April of 2021, received 78 applications to date, with 33 grants awarded based on applications meeting the criteria. This is targeted at the hardest hit residents (less than 25/5mbps in service) in areas where fibre is not available.