

Memorandum

Date: February 15, 2023

To: Members of Council

From: Erin Britnell, Director, Corporate Strategy and Innovation

Subject: Update on Broadband

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide an update on the status of the Town's priority of achieving Broadband for all residents.

Over the past eight years, Council has prioritized the expansion of Broadband to all households in Caledon. Staff are excited to say that through active participation in the Southwestern Ontario Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) collaborative and ongoing advocacy to both the Federal and Provincial governments, it is believed that existing grant programs will provide funding to cover all remaining areas of Caledon that are underserved with access to high-speed internet. Residents would simply need to work with the provider(s) to connect from the roadway to their homes. It is expected that an announcement is coming shortly by the Federal government.

While the Town is still waiting on the announcement and details of the provider(s) and project specifics, what is known is that there is no longer a need to collect a levy specific to Broadband as the gap it was intended for will be successfully filled by the end of 2025 (the Province's goal for ensuring all residents in Ontario have access to internet). As such no Levy is included in the 2023 proposed budget. While the exact return on investment values won't be available until the announcement is made on the grant funding, it is estimated that for every dollar generated through the levy, at least \$10 in external investment in broadband was leveraged through private investment and grant funding.

History of Broadband Action

As Broadband falls outside of the Town's services, Town Council has been active in advocating to both the Provincial and Federal governments to resolve this challenge for residents in not just Caledon but all rural areas in Ontario. The minimum level of service advocated for is 50mbps/10mbps or the national minimum for high-speed service.

Some of the action that the Town has already taken includes:

- Council made their initial commitment to the Southwestern Ontario Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) collaborative in 2016, data indicated that approximately 70% of Caledon residents had access to high-speed internet, however they were primarily residents within urban areas of Caledon, with rural residents largely underserved.
- With delays in the release of SWIFT funding, the Town-led a call for proposals which led to a partnership to build a network in the underserved area of the Bolton Business Park, and to build a backbone along the railway to connect future builds in the Cheltenham and Inglewood areas.

- Three SWIFT projects were awarded and completed between 2020-2021 (Grange, rural Palgrave and rural west of Bolton), currently approximately 74% of properties have access to broadband and 42% of roads are covered.
- In order to cover the remaining areas, the Town supported multiple applications to both the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) program offered by the Federal government and ICON program offered by the Provincial government. The Town also encouraged local providers to submit applications to the Provincial governments “reverse auction” process.
- Bell Canada was awarded early funding to cover small areas around Palgrave, Inglewood, and Sligo areas in Caledon. This work is underway with targeted completion in 2023. This work would bring coverage up to approximately 77% of households and 44% of roads.