The Township of The Archipelago

Information Report to Council

Report No.: Connectivity 2023_04   **Date:** April 13, 2023

Originator: Joe Villeneuve, Manager of Corporate Services

                 Glen Barnden, Connectivity Advisor

Subject: Connectivity – Activity Report

BACKGROUND

Internet Connectivity remains a topic of interest for many residents and Council is active with various initiatives, news and service providers in understanding how our residents will acquire service or benefit from enhanced services.

The Township of The Archipelago remains active in a number of ongoing initiatives to improve internet service throughout the township and advocate for cost-effective, reliable, high-speed internet for all residents.

Reference: https://www.thearchipelago.on.ca/p/internet-connectivity

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SPRING INTERIM

Ongoing activity related to the ***Province's Accelerated High Speed Internet Program (AHSIP) installation through Bell*** for connectivity.

A meeting was held on March 27th with the West Parry Sound (WPS) municipal representatives, Infrastructure Ontario and Bell representatives to discuss municipal preparedness for right-of-way permit requests and other asks associated with the AHSIP deployment within the municipalities. The concern of the many municipal representatives is not knowing the extent and demands of the program within our areas. Bell has not provided a 'scope of work' that would allow one to assess where internet improvements are coming. This will need to be addressed as it limits development strategies to reach residents not included in the AHSIP Bell contract (presumably land based property focus only).

The Broadband One Window was discussed. The expansion of the Broadband One Window (BOW) platform will be going live on Wednesday, April 19th, 2023. The Township of the Archipelago is already registered with BOW.

BOW is a secure log-in only platform serving as a communication portal between all stakeholders involved in building out internet infrastructure. As AHSIP moves to the construction and delivery phase, BOW continues to serve as a GIS platform, an enhanced document management system, a permit application status tracker, and a repository for infrastructure and other data.

This expansion of BOW introduces a new Central Hub page for AHSIP resources and announcements allowing delivery partners to stay connected and expands the Support Request

feature to Municipalities for enhanced co-ordination and communication. Stakeholders of the program can submit requests for support from the Technical Assistance Team (TAT) through this feature to expedite the delivery of broadband infrastructure.

Two live BOW training/Q&A sessions are scheduled for April.

There are 8 Lots that were not auctioned off in the initial AHSIP round and the Ministry of Infrastructure is currently building a strategy to connect residents in those Lots.

NEXT STEPS

1) Attend Canada's Rural & Remote Broadband Community (CRRBC) Eastern Conference in North Bay Ontario May 9th& 10th 2023. This will provide an opportunity to network with representatives from other AHSIP "Lot" winners to learn about their current deployment experience and more importantly to lend a voice and discuss solutions for the underserved and non-served communities left out of the Accelerated High Speed Internet Program.

2) Ongoing engagement with Blue Sky Networks for additional connectivity support. Blue Sky Net is a non-profit corporation funded by FedNor providing mapping coverage and speed service availability in Northern Ontario. The primary functions are to enhance broadband access to unserved/underserved areas, develop and implement ICT applications and to offer training, education and awareness of technology to residents and businesses alike.

3) Launch the Residential Internet Connectivity Survey with the aim to determine current connectivity demand, speeds currently available, what effect connectivity might have on duration of seasonal residence and resulting Economic Impact this might produce for local businesses, employment and accommodation.

4) Utilizing our Guiding Principals, we continue discussions with local Internet Service Provider's to deliver Canadian connectivity solutions to non-served and off-shore residents. After lengthy discussions with Vianet regarding available infrastructure and possible tower locates utilizing new wireless technology, we are waiting to hear back from VIANET with a proposal for connectivity for the Point Au Baril and surrounding communities including off-shore residents.

Smart Tower/Tower Hill Communication Tower Activity/Progress Update

This infrastructure is currently utilized by the Township to extend internet and phone services to facilities of the Operations Department. In addition, it serves as the basis for deploying the microwave links that are essential for extending bandwidth further afield (hop and drop) to other infrastructure beyond the town.

https://smartnow-wpsgn.hub.arcgis.com/apps/cfeeef9cb4914fd78c6c625f9568868a/explore

For 2023 there are several items being examined with respect to the Township's communication tower ('Smart Tower') on Tower Hill in Parry Sound.

1) Staff are evaluating interests from municipal neighbours to re-locate radio equipment pertinent to operations and make site improvements to potentially accommodate future tenants.

    Town of Parry Sound Fire Department
    Town of Parry Sound Operations
    Township of The Archipelago Operations

2) Staff are working with existing tenants to formalize tenant relationships through appropriate agreements and processes.

3) Staff are sourcing solutions that addresses asset maintenance and facility management.

*verbal description of items to be discussed with Council in meeting.

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Respectfully Submitted,

Glen Barnden

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Joe Villeneuve   **Glen Barnden**
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