

Motion

Meeting of Regular Council Meeting: Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Background

The Town of Tecumseh Rural Broadband Advisory Committee (RBAC) was established to investigate, identify and advise on broadband high speed internet coverage in rural areas of the Town and act in an advisory role to Town Council.

At the December 8, 2021 RBAC meeting, discussion was held regarding the Ontario government's recent efforts to help bring high speed internet access to every community by the end of 2025, including launching a Request for Proposals (RFP) as part of a new competitive bidding process.

The importance of focusing on how broadband high speed internet is being delivered and the allocation of government funding as part the Ontario government's next steps was identified.

Accordingly, the following motion was passed at the December 8 RBAC:

Motion: RBAC - 12/21

Moved By Member Dan Grosu

Seconded By Councillor Tania Jobin

THAT the Rural Broadband Advisory Committee recommend Tecumseh Council consider sending a letter and resolution in support of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus and SWIFT advice that Infrastructure Ontario pause the procurement process until recommendations have been addressed.

Carried

Resolution

Whereas broadband has become an essential service that is necessary to encourage economic growth and stability, modernize and streamline the delivery of health and social services, provide greater educational opportunities, increase capacity to administer and govern institutions, improve the environment, and create fairness and opportunity for everyone;

And Whereas the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC):

- Represents 15 upper and single tier municipalities in Southwestern Ontario with more than three million residents; and
- Recognizes that universal access to high-speed broadband connectivity is fundamental to the continued relevance and future prosperity of small urban / rural communities in Southwestern Ontario.

And Whereas WOWC's desired outcomes would see the Province of Ontario's *Accelerated High Speed Internet Program (AHSIP)*:

- Maximize the amount of fibre deployed with the funds available;
- Provide a level playing field that allows high participation of local and regional Internet Service Providers (ISPs); and
- Ensure equitability of funding and outcomes between all municipalities in Southwestern Ontario (lower- and upper-tier).

And Whereas Infrastructure Ontario (IO) released RFQ No. 21-048: Request for Qualifications for *Accelerated High Speed Internet Program* on September 9, 2021;

AND WHEREAS WOWC supports the Province of Ontario's program and want it to be as effective as possible;

Now Therefore Be It Hereby Resolved That the Council of the Town of Tecumseh send a letter, in addition to the letter sent by the Chair of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, to the Minister of Infrastructure, The Honourable Kinga Surma, copying the Premier of Ontario, The Honourable Doug Ford, and MPPs of Southwestern Ontario, recommending that Infrastructure Ontario pause the procurement process until the following recommendations have been addressed:

- Lot sizes are reduced to an average reserve price of \$10M with no single lot having a reserve price greater than \$20M;
- "Wired" and "Wireless" designations are removed from the lots in line with Infrastructure Ontario's (IO) amendment to allow hybrid bids in all lots, with "Wired" connectivity as the preferred option;
- Reserved prices are recalculated for all lots and are based on hybrid solutions rather than "Wired" or "Wireless" solutions;
- A clear / transparent formula for evaluating proposals that balances bid price with higher fibre content bids is created and communicated to participants;
- The Request for Proposals (RFP), when issued, be made visible to the public given that it contains no propriety Internet Service Provider (ISP) information;
- Immediately release the lot maps to all municipalities in Ontario so that they can review and comment;
- Ensure that small ISPs in Southwestern Ontario are consulted directly and their input is considered;
- The details of the procurement be re-evaluated and IO consider the following changes:
 - Allow for progress payments to the recipients rather than holding 100 per cent of the funding until customers are in-service;
 - Eliminate the bid bond requirements;

- Seriously reconsider the position that the Construction Act applies / eliminate the bonding requirements called for by the Act (especially if no progress payments are being made);
- Eliminate the plan to hold back the final 10 per cent and pay 100 per cent of the project cost by the time the project is complete.

Moved by: Councillor Brian Houston

Seconded by: