

STAFF REPORT: Office of The Chief Administrative Officer

REPORT TO: Council
MEETING DATE: June 28, 2010
REPORT NO.: CAO.10.11
SUBJECT: Rural Connections Broadband Program Grant Application
PREPARED BY: Paul Graham,
Chief Administrative Officer

A. Recommendation

THAT Council receive CAO Report No. CAO.10.11 entitled "Rural Connections Broadband Program Grant Application" and;

THAT Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to submit an application to the "Rural Connections Broadband Program – Intake 3" as a priority of Council and;

FURTHER THAT Council commits to securing the remaining project funding should the Grant Application be successful.

B. Background

On January 7, 2010, the CAOs from local municipalities and including the County met to discuss a number of matters with Fareed Amin, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In that meeting there was quality discussions and general agreement that we all should be working together to expand Broadband coverage in Grey County.

As Council is aware, The Blue Mountains is finalizing our Economic Development Plan and being connected is a critical early action identified in that Plan.

Since January 7th, we have received a letter dated May 14, 2010 from the Rural Community Development Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, announcing a Third Intake in the Rural Connections Broadband Program. The attached letter confirms that a submission deadline for this Intake is July 8, 2010.

In response to this letter, I organized a second meeting with the Grey County CAOs to discuss an application under this Third Intake. That meeting was held on June 11, 2010 where the CAOs discussed the possibility of a joint application to this Rural Connection Broadband Program Intake. At this June 11th meeting Mr. Geoff Hogan, the IT Coordinator for Grey County made a presentation to the CAOs present regarding the past and current Grey County activities on Broadband. During that meeting the CAOs learned that in fact that Grey County had been successful in securing pending from both the First and Second Intake of this Program.

Because the work arising from the Second Intake is not complete and will not be complete prior to the July 7th date, the County is not eligible to make a further application for a Third Intake.

From Mr. Hogan we learned a significant part of Grey County will have improved broadband coverage arising from the work that the County is undertaking. There will remain sections of The Blue Mountains, Meaford and other Grey County municipalities that will benefit from improved broadband coverage. I attach a copy of a map produced by Grey County indicating the portion of The Blue Mountains that requires further investment in broadband.

I propose that The Blue Mountains be the lead applicant for the Rural Connections Broadband Program Grant which application is required by July 7, 2010. In that application we will identify that we will be partnering with other Grey County municipalities and the County in the delivery of this Program.

On June 17, 2010, Mr. Cummings and myself met with Mr. Hogan of Grey County and Mr. Doug Maddock, Broadband Coordinator for the Western Region of Ontario. This discussion with Mr. Maddock was very helpful in assisting us form our approach to make this application.

The application does require a resolution of Council in support of the application. Thus, I'm making this recommendation to Council today.

C. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan recognizes economic development as a critical part of the future of this community. Improving broadband connectivity throughout The Blue Mountains is an important early action identified in our Economic Development Strategy.

D. Environmental Impact

None.

E. Budget Impact

The Province will contribute up to one-third (1/3) of the eligible costs, to a maximum of \$1 million dollars per application. The fact is that there is a little more than \$1 million dollars available for the Third Intake. Having said that we still believe it is important that we make an application because anything that we can do to improve our broadband coverage will be a benefit to the community. Municipalities are responsible to secure the remaining share of the eligible funds from their own resources and/or from partner contributions.

We have learned that with the two grants received by Grey County, the remaining two-thirds (2/3) have been provided by private sector partners that are developing the broadband infrastructure. Our discussions with Mr. Doug Maddock, the Provincial Broadband Coordinator for the Western Region confirmed that a similar arrangement would be suitable for this grant application.

In fact, we would team up with Grey County should we be successful and likely use the same broadband provider that the County is working with at the present time to increase service in The Blue Mountains. We are therefore satisfied that this project will have no budget implications for the Town other than some Staff time to manage and coordinate these activities with our other municipal partners.

F. Attachment

1. May 14, 2010 letter from the Rural Community Development Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
2. Location Map identifying underserviced areas

Respectfully submitted,

J.P. (Paul) Graham, P. Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact
Paul Graham
pgraham@thebluemountains.ca
519-599-3131 ext. 234

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MAY 20 2010

Ministry of Agriculture,
Food and Rural Affairs

Ministère de l'Agriculture,
de l'Alimentation et
des Affaires rurales

4th Floor
1 Stone Road West
Guelph, Ontario N1G 4Y2
Tel: 519 826-6642
Fax: 519 826-4336

4^e étage
1 Stone Road West
Guelph (Ontario) N1G 4Y2
Tél. : 519 826-6642
Télééc. : 519 826-4336



Rural Community Development Branch

May 14, 2010

Paul Graham
Chief Administrative Officer
Town of The Blue Mountains
P.O. Box 310
26 Bridge Street East
Thornbury, ON
N0H 2P0

Dear Paul Graham:

Rural Connections Broadband Program (Rural Connections)

As you may recall, on June 26, 2008, the Government of Ontario launched the Rural Connections Broadband Program, a multi-million, four-year initiative designed to reduce broadband infrastructure gaps in underserved rural regions in southern Ontario. Rural Connections leverages broadband infrastructure investment from private-sector businesses and public partners and has a positive impact on citizens/businesses by enhancing economic development and improving access to public services such as e-learning, e-health and e-government.

To date, we have had two successful application Intakes. Today, we are pleased to launch the final round of applications, Intake Three. **The submission deadline is 5:00 pm on Thursday July 8, 2010.**

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs welcomes applications from municipalities in rural south-western and central Ontario working with community stakeholders and other partners, including applicable First Nations, to develop and implement a plan designed to improve broadband accessibility in rural areas.

The province invites representatives of eligible municipalities to attend one of two general information sessions that are designed to provide applicable municipalities with a practical, concrete review of the application form and guidelines.



The details of the sessions are as follows:

Monday May 31, 2010, 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Enterprise Brant
330 West Street, Unit 10
Brantford, Ontario
N3R 7V5
Phone number: (519) 752-4636

Tuesday June 1, 2010, 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

North Durham Police Station (Community Room)
15765 Hwy. 12 (south of Reach Rd.),
Port Perry, Ontario
L9L 1B2
Phone number: (905) 579-1520

Wednesday June 2, 2010, 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

WebEx Session. Access details will be provided upon confirmation with Doug Maddock.

Please contact Doug Maddock, Broadband Coordinator at 519-826-6634 or 1-888-466-2372, ext. 66634 to confirm your attendance or for support in completing your application.

Additional information is also available at www.ontario.ca/rural or from the information line, 1-888-588-4111.

Thank you for your anticipated interest and support in this worthwhile initiative.



Barb Swartzentruber
Manager,
Broadband Programs

c. Mr. Doug Maddock, Broadband Coordinator, Western Region