



# Agenda

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## Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

**Meeting Date:** November 4, 2020  
**Meeting Time:** 3:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams Meeting  
**Prepared by:** Sarah Merrifield, Executive Assistant Committees of Council

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### A. Call to Order

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- Task Force Member Attendance
- Additions to the Agenda

#### **Declaration of Pecuniary Interest and general nature thereof**

NOTE: In accordance with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* and the Town Procedural By-law 2019-56, Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force members must file a written statement of the interest and its general nature with the Clerk for inclusion on the Registry.

- Review of Minutes (October 14, 2020)

### B. Staff Reports and Deputations

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#### B.1 Deputations, if any

None

### C. Matters for Discussion

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- C.1 Discussion with Jeffery Campbell, Resident  
Re: Internet at Christie Beach/Sunset Boulevard
- C.2 Update from Blair Almond, Bruce Street Technologies  
Re: ICON Grant Application and Progress
- C.3 FCM Broadband Master Class Webinar – Deputy Mayor Potter
- C.4 Follow-up to Discussion with Municipality of Grey Highlands and Municipality of Meaford regarding Potential Interest in Broadband Provision – CAO Shawn Everitt

**C.5 Proposed Schedule and Itinerary for Public Information Centre – Mayor Soever and Shawn Everitt**

**C.6 Status of ICON Press Release**

**C.7 Hydro One Utility and Right-of-Way Use Research – Director of Operations Shawn Carey**

**D. Correspondence**

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None

**E. New and Unfinished Business**

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**E.1 Additions to the Agenda**

**E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting**

**F. Upcoming Meeting Dates**

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November 18, 2020

**G. Adjournment**

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Time of adjournment



# Minutes

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## Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force

**Meeting Date:** October 14, 2020  
**Meeting Time:** 11:00 a.m.  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams Meeting  
**Prepared by** Sarah Merrifield, Executive Assistant Committees of Council

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### A. Call to Order

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Deputy Mayor Rob Potter called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. with Councillor Rob Sampson and Mayor Alar Soever present.

Director of Operations Shawn Carey was also present. Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt joined the meeting at 11:04 a.m.

- **Task Force Member Attendance**
- **Additions to the Agenda**

None

#### **Declaration of Pecuniary Interest and general nature thereof**

NOTE: In accordance with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* and the Town Procedural By-law 2019-56, Rural Access to Broadband Internet Technology (RABIT) Task Force members must file a written statement of the interest and its general nature with the Clerk for inclusion on the Registry.

None

- **Review of Minutes (October 1, 2020)**

Minutes reviewed and deemed sufficient.

### B. Staff Reports and Deputations

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#### B.1 Deputations, if any

None

## **C. Matters for Discussion**

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### **C.1 Introduction of RABIT Task Force and Representative from Town of Caledon**

#### **RABIT Task Force**

- Deputy Mayor Rob Potter
- Mayor Alar Soever
- Councillor Rob Sampson
- Chief Administrative Officer Shawn Everitt
- Director of Operations Shawn Carey

#### **Town of Caledon**

- Manager of Information Technology, Erin Britnell MPA

### **C.2 Summary of RABIT Task Force – Deputy Mayor Rob Potter**

### **C.3 Town of Caledon Broadband Internet Overview – Erin Britnell**

- Caledon uses partners to provide utility services
- Potential partners demonstrate consistent, affordable internet at a 50/10 rate
- Broadband levy collected annually to support the service
- Fiberoptic installation mandated in Subdivision Agreements
- Request for Proposal process used by the Town of Caledon to seek internet provider partners
- Member of SWIFT
- Broadband projects and provision tracked through Caledon's GIS system and Mayor's office champions the broadband work
- Grant-style system for providing successful broadband proponents with funds to provide internet service, paid once the system is built and demonstrably operational, with rates being increased only at the rate of inflation
- Caledon to provide Request for Proposal example, example of Municipal Software Agreement, Permits and Telecommunications Protocols

### **C.4 Questions**

- Task Force questions were addressed through Item C.3 discussion

### **C.5 ICON 2<sup>nd</sup> Intake Discussion**

To find information about the ICON program, please go to <https://www.ontario.ca/page/available-funding-opportunities-ontario-government>.

The deadline for the Stage 1 application is January 8, 2021. If you have created an application for Intake 1 and did not submit it, you can complete and submit as part of the second intake.

- Task Force discussed importance of determining how to move forward, perhaps both through the ICON grant opportunity, and by exploring the option to offer Request for Proposals for companies to bid on
- Shawn Everitt to reach out to Grey Highlands, Municipality of Meaford and determine if they are interested in participating in the broadband discussion
- Mayor Soever and Shawn Everitt to develop a potential Public Information Centre schedule and proposed itinerary for Task Force consideration
- Following potential PIC, the Task Force can confirm if an RFI/RFP process would be appropriate
- Deputy Mayor Potter to research potential internet providers and advise them of the Town's interest in provision of broadband, the Public Information Centre
- Press Release should be provided to identify that Bruce Street Technologies was successful in the first ICON intake, and identify the second intake is now open

#### **C.6 Follow-up from Previous Meeting**

- **The Blue Mountains portion of SWIFT Investment**
  - SWIFT funded through general taxation dollars
- **Potential Grey County and Ontario Hydro Role in Provision of Internet in The Blue Mountains, if any**
  - Hydro One does not pay to use road allowance for hydro poles, but charges rental fees for utility companies using the poles
  - Additional research is required regarding potential role of Hydro One or similar utility companies

#### **D. Correspondence**

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None

#### **E. New and Unfinished Business**

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##### **E.1 Additions to the Agenda**

##### **E.2 Items Identified for Discussion at Next Meeting**

- **Follow-up to Discussion with Municipality of Meaford and Municipality of Grey Highlands**
- **Proposed Schedule and Itinerary for Public Information Centre**
- **Press Release re: ICON**
- **Research regarding Hydro Ono One**

#### **F. Upcoming Meeting Dates**

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To be scheduled.

## **G. Adjournment**

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The Task Force adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

## Municipal Broadband Master Class webinar October 21, 2020

### Hosted by Municipal World

**Jesse Hirsh** – Jesse started a company called Local Global Access in mid-1990s to allow him to access the internet. To ease the financial burden, he sublet the service to five neighbours. His main business is researching rural and municipal broadband.

*The points below are all from his comments or answers to questions.*

Municipalities should play a leadership role in broadband and broadband infrastructure

Internet is vital for economic development, social and cultural connections, education, medical, etc.

Look at the internet as modern version of the Town Square, using Facebook, Twitter, etc. instead of a town crier.

Internet is really another part of your infrastructure. Not something to do once and forget but more like roads in that it is dynamic, although it will need less maintenance.

There is a growing disparity not only between those who have access and those who don't, but also between communities/municipalities. Those that are taking a leadership role are seeing the benefits, especially during the pandemic, and are seeing better results in terms of economic development, ability to attract doctors, etc.

My main take away is that there are some questions we need to answer as we go forward.

#### 1. What format?

- Fibre
- Wireless
- Satellite
- Hybrid
- Mesh

**Fibre:** By far the best option. Offers the best service now and is most adaptable for faster speeds and new technologies. It's likely that fibre will be hundreds of times faster than wireless in the future.

The growth of fibre networks emphasizes the disparity mentioned earlier. In short, it's important to provide the best service available to allow all the stakeholders in the community the access they need to be able to keep up. The current 50/10 standard is acceptable but will be outdated in the next few years. One gb will be the standard before long (SWIFT is already touting it as their new goal.)

**Wireless:** Next best to fibre in most cases but goal should be to have fibre as soon as practical. Basically, as with other options, better than not having service, but fibre is king.

**Satellite and Low Earth Orbit (LEO):** Very expensive. Limited capacity as population density increases. It has improved a lot but still lags far behind and shows little promise for the future.

**Hybrid:** May be the best option for a lot of communities that are hard-to-serve. Again, offers chance to have reasonable broadband service if fibre isn't available.

**Mesh:** Connect through a series of small-scale local ISPs, a kind of hodge-podge service that works at a grass roots level. The Althea service (<https://althea.net/>) is an example.

## 2. Are there creative ways to reach hard-to-serve areas?

There are examples of areas that have small-scale networks that deliver a limited but useful level of service. For example, school-based networks that allow students to do their schoolwork or library-based networks to allow residents to access library programs. Sometimes a small, local network is all that's required to meet the needs of some residents.

## 3. Ownership: Municipal, private or combination

Municipalities are looking at broadband projects as a crucial investment in the sustainability of their communities. The municipalities, themselves, are seeing greater need for access to broadband in outlying areas for their own purposes, for example to monitor roads, water and wastewater systems, etc. Ashley Weedon has written some articles in Municipal World about the impacts of this kind of investment. We would also have to consider the impacts of not making such an investment at a reasonable level.

Also, with the growing exodus of people from the cities to the rural areas and smaller communities, the expectation for broadband access is growing and there is more pressure. Increased pressure to open up existing infrastructure such as fibre cable, telephone and hydro poles might do some good right now.

At least one municipality, Quinte West, has installed conduit, as we have discussed. I have contact information for Brian Johnston and will follow up with him. I may ask him to meet with us if the Task Force wishes.

### Costs

The start-up costs are actually much lower than most would think. ISPs charge a large mark-up on start-up costs. There isn't really that great a cost and costs can be recouped and reduced by using creative means. For example, there are various methods of running cable. Jesse said there are actually places where they just use a heavier cable and lay it on the ground and through driveway culverts, etc., (obviously, he wouldn't recommend that because of weather and potential vandalism and hacking).

### Municipal Broadband Ideas

Various municipalities have taken different approaches and there are several good possibilities. Some run their own network, some work through agreements with private enterprise (one or more companies) and still others are community-operated with support from the municipality. The best example of the latter is the B4RN program in England <https://b4rn.org.uk/> which bills itself as "the world's faster rural broadband".

Maintenance and service is also a mix, everything from private contractors to municipal staff to volunteer tech support within the community.

Some other examples:

Guifi-net (Spain) <https://guifi.net/> which is actually provided free of cost to customers in various communities in the Catalan region.

O-Net – Olds, Alta. – <https://o-net.ca/> Run as a community co-operative.

Kaslo infoNet—Kaslo, BC – <https://kin.bc.ca/> A not-for-profit service in the Kootenay area.

Ammon, Idaho – <http://2021.ammonfiber.com/> offers high-speed internet at as low as \$10/month. They offer a range of service packages and customers sign up for whatever level they need. (Go the site and click on the images for the videos to see how it operates.)  
Chattanooga, Tenn. – <https://epb.com/> The electrical utility took on the task of supplying internet and is deemed one of the best broadband operations in the world. The project helped develop an entrepreneurial culture and attract new and innovative businesses to the city. Very successful and often used as an example of what can be done.

## **Key Actions**

### **Increase broadband literacy and Advocacy**

There is a general lack of knowledge, even within municipal governments, of how the internet works and what it can deliver now and, more importantly, in the future. We need to foster a greater understanding within Town Hall and in the Community. We need to understand the capabilities, vulnerabilities, and so on. Increased internet training would be a good idea.

### **Municipalities have to be Broadband Friendly**

Municipalities have had a habit of not being open to broadband infrastructure proposals. Those that open the gates and either take on their own projects or work with private or community partners will see a payoff in many ways. Council has to lead a change in attitude that encourages use of town lands, etc. for broadband infrastructure.

### **Engaging stakeholders and the Public**

We have already discussed the ideas that were raised:

Issue an RFP to find interested potential ISPs

Invite companies to a public open house where they can present their proposals (Jesse said this works very well, especially since it puts some pressure on potential partners to compete.)

### **Recovering costs**

Several possibilities were discussed for recovering costs.

Offer an option to add to tax bills and amortize over a period of years (similar to water and wastewater infrastructure or tile drainage loans)

Charge a monthly levy or fee

Offer opportunity for collective bargaining – neighbours pool their resources to reduce start-up costs.

Make sure broadband is part of all infrastructure upgrades.

Potential to use lighter strands on existing poles

Look for creative ideas that make use of any local advantage

Use local knowledge – Regional approach doesn't usually work very well because local knowledge can be a huge benefit. Programs such as SWIFT and EORN (Eastern Ontario Regional Network) aren't delivering as effectively as local programs.

You can mandate that new development include broadband infrastructure to local standards (i.e. 50/10 or even 1 gig). This can be a way to reduce costs for connections "upstream" in the same way that water infrastructure does.

### **Mapping**

Use whatever resources you can muster. Sometimes, drones can be the best way to survey roads to determine potential connections.

Fort Erie conducted a survey of residents, businesses, etc., and used that to create ESRI mapping.

<https://forterie.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e9e119eddc37489493585255438ffece>

(My own thought -- Hire students to travel roads to map locations, using aerial photos as a guide.)

### **Advocacy**

Become champions for local broadband. Improve broadband literacy in the community by showing public how they can use it. Ensure economic development, physician recruitment, etc., are making possible recruits well aware of the service.

Work with other municipalities to push CRTC to open up existing infrastructure at little or no cost and force big players to share and be more transparent. For example, they often have very detailed mapping but will not share it (although they will share less-detailed mapping.)

After the session ended, I discussed with Jesse the possibility of circulating a resolution to ask the feds to push the CRTC to be more cooperative. He thought it was a great idea and offered to help. The idea is that I will draft a resolution and he will add technical language and will get a colleague to help as well.

### **Enabling Competition**

Very important to ensure there is open competition at all times. One community, Ammon, Idaho, offers high-speed internet at as low as \$10/month. They offer a range of service packages and customers sign up for whatever level they need.

Sorry this is so long but I thought we can make use of a lot of this.

Rob P.