

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA

REPORT NO. CAO-2021-0008

**FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
COUNCIL**

May 5, 2021

**SUBJECT: PROGRESS REPORT AND NEXT STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE
BROADBAND STRATEGY**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Council receive Report No. CAO-2021-0008 prepared by the Office of the CAO dated May 5, 2021 respecting the next steps for implementing the Broadband Strategy.
2. That Council receive the broadband consultant's progress report, Attachment 1 to Report No. CAO-2021-0008.
3. That Council endorse the Town of Georgina Broadband Roadmap (Attachment 1 – Appendix 6 to Report No. CAO-2021-0008) as the detailed blueprint for implementing the Broadband Strategy.
4. That Council adopt the Wireless Telecommunications on Municipal Property Policy (Attachment 1 – Appendix 2 to Report No. CAO-2021-0008).
5. That Council endorse the updated Georgina Antenna System Siting Protocol (Attachment 1 – Appendix 3 to Report No. CAO-2021-0008).
6. That Council approve the connection of the Egypt works yard facility to the YorkNet dark fibre network.
7. That Council endorse staff to explore partnerships and pilot project opportunities with Internet Service Providers and other organizations to further investigate potential technology solutions for expanding broadband in Georgina.
8. That Council endorse the exploration of hosting an annual innovation and connectivity conference in Georgina.
9. That Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate and enter into a new contract with Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc., having an upper limit of \$40,000, to assist with the implementation of the Town of Georgina Broadband Roadmap, to be financed through the funding set aside for the Broadband Strategy implementation in the corporate reserve account.

2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to:

- provide Council with a progress report and recommended next steps for implementing the Broadband Strategy,
- seek Council endorsement of a Town of Georgina Broadband Roadmap and associated approvals for implementing the Broadband Strategy,
- approve entering into a new contract with the Broadband Consultant to support implementation of the roadmap, and
- seek Council approval for the connection of the Egypt works yard facility to the YorkNet dark fibre network.

3. BACKGROUND:

Council approved the Broadband Strategy on April 22, 2020

The vision set out in the Council approved Broadband Strategy is that: “All businesses and residents have access to affordable and reliable broadband connectivity options at the service levels they require based on technology advancements, private market forces and funding commitments from senior levels of government.”

Georgina’s broadband vision is based on the following four priorities:

1. Connectivity for all residents allowing them to participate fully in the digital world (e.g. education, healthcare, telework).
2. Leveraging broadband to foster economic development, business attraction, expansion and retention.
3. Provide community Wi-Fi, including at libraries, tourist destinations and other public facilities.
4. Connectivity for the Town of Georgina’s municipal needs.

The Broadband Strategy includes a variety of deliverables

The Broadband Strategy includes the set of actions outlined below, which were completed over the past year in collaboration with the broadband consultant Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc.:

1. Identification of a Broadband Champion to ensure sustained momentum.
2. Issuance of a Request for Information (RFI) to formally engage Internet Service Providers (ISPs) on approaches for improving connectivity, with a report back to Council on a recommended roadmap, informed by the RFI.
3. Development/review of a set of broadband-related policies and requirements to streamline broadband expansion initiatives.

4. ANALYSIS:

Broadband Champions are in place to drive connectivity improvements

Given the priority of this initiative, which has been heightened through the pandemic, the Chief Administrative Officer and the Head of Corporate Service Delivery Excellence are serving as the Town's Broadband Champions. The role of the Broadband Champions is to facilitate and expedite the implementation of enhanced broadband connectivity across Georgina.

Broadband expansion is underway in Georgina

There has been notable progress over the past year in advancing broadband connectivity in Georgina:

- YorkNet's dark fibre network has been established in Udora with two different ISPs now rolling out fibre-to-the-home for residents in the area.
- The Udora Community Hall is now connected to fibre and offers complimentary Wi-Fi (inside and outside) to residents and visitors.
- YorkNet's dark fibre network has been brought to the Civic Centre and the Georgina Ice Palace with the connections planned for later this year.
- Provincial and federal grant funding applications were submitted by broadband providers to expand connectivity in Georgina.

A number of Internet Service Providers were engaged as part of this initiative

A RFI was issued in the fall of 2020 to gather input from ISPs and other stakeholders on approaches for enhancing broadband connectivity in the Town of Georgina. Nine responses were received from various companies. Staff and the consultant met with some of the respondents as well as other companies that did not formally submit a response. In all, the Town engaged 17 organizations with ongoing discussions being held with some. The feedback from this engagement process has provided invaluable insight for moving forward and serves as the basis for the Town of Georgina Broadband Roadmap (Attachment 1 – Appendix 6).

The Request for Information generated various benefits

The following list outlines the key positive outcomes from the Request for Information:

- Served to message to ISPs from across Ontario and beyond that Georgina is open for broadband expansion.
- Attracted and introduced potential partner ISPs to YorkNet for its application to both provincial and federal broadband funding programs to provide expanded fibre-to-the-home service in Georgina's rural area.

- Attracted interest in leasing the Town's South Shore Community Broadband tower infrastructure, which will also enhance connectivity options for residents in rural/underserved areas.
- Served to market YorkNet's dark fibre leasing opportunities across Georgina.
- Provided key information for developing/updating the suite of Georgina's telecommunication policies/requirements to facilitate and streamline broadband expansion.
- Triggered one of the ISPs to submit a grant application to the Federal Universal Broadband Fund to support wireless service expansion in Georgina.
- Set in motion ongoing collaboration discussions with large and small ISPs and technology companies on potential pilot projects.

A detailed roadmap has been created for implementing the Broadband Strategy

Attachment 1 – Appendix 6 serves as the detailed roadmap for implementing the Town's Broadband Strategy. The implementation roadmap provides a detailed blueprint for advancing the following areas:

- Exploring and expanding broadband investment attraction, partnerships and funding opportunities
- Maximizing YorkNet's dark fibre network in Georgina
- Leveraging the Town's SSCB wireless tower infrastructure
- Implementing community Wi-Fi in key locations
- Exploring and implementing broadband pilot projects
- Enhancing the Georgina broadband webpage as a key information source for residents, businesses and Internet Service Providers

Key enhancements were made to Georgina's suite of broadband related policies

The following is a summary of the key findings/recommendations related to the broadband policy review:

- A Wireless Telecommunications on Municipal Property Policy (Attachment 1 – Appendix 2) has been developed for Council approval to facilitate the immediate leasing of towers. The current review has indicated Georgina is in a good position to lease its SSCB wireless tower infrastructure to ISPs as a key strategy for providing broadband in underserved areas. The policy sets out a fee schedule for leasing tower space and installing telecommunications equipment on Town-owned property. Where advantageous to the municipality and residents (e.g. to facilitate enhanced broadband connectivity in hard-to-service areas), the policy provides delegated authority to the Chief Administrative Officer and Treasurer to waive and/or amend licence fees, in whole or in part. Staff will report out annually on any fees waived.
- A Colocation Licensing Agreement template was developed to support the above wireless tower leasing opportunity and is attached to the consultant's

report (Attachment 1 – Appendix 4 – Telecommunications Equipment Site Licence Template).

- Georgina’s Antenna System Siting Protocol was updated with minor revisions to align with the current legislation. The updated protocol is attached to the consultant’s report (Attachment 1 – Appendix 3).
- The Municipal Consent process is to be updated to include the requirement for security deposits that can be drawn upon in the case of work that does not meet Town standards. This should alleviate the primary concern of staff that there is little ability to hold requestors accountable for faulty or unfinished work.
- A draft Municipal Access Agreement (MAA) has been prepared based on York Region’s preferred template and is included as part of the consultant’s report (Attachment 1 – Appendix 5). Prior to adopting a MAA process, the consultant is recommending further collaboration with York Region to facilitate alignment and leverage best practices.
- The Connectivity Criteria for New Development was reviewed. With the exception of one minor adjustment, it was concluded the suite of policies and provisions is appropriate at this time.
- Based on discussions with ISPs and the Region, the consultant is recommending to not move forward with a Dig Once Policy, but rather consider establishing a Utility Coordinating Committee (UCC) that comes together regularly to discuss projects and coordinate access requests.

Connection of key Town facilities to YorkNet dark fibre is currently underway

On May 6, 2020, Council authorized the connection of the following Town facilities to YorkNet’s dark fibre:

- Georgina Ice Palace Complex
- Udora Community Hall
- Georgina Civic Centre
- Stephen Leacock Theatre and Club 55 building

All of these facilities are or will be connected by the end of 2021. It should be noted the Keswick Fire Station was connected to YorkNet fibre several years ago.

Given the Egypt works yard facility is to be expanded (subject to grant funding approval), and serve as a centralized road operations facility, it is being recommended this location also be connected to YorkNet’s fibre network to provide enhanced connectivity from a business continuity perspective. The annual connection fees for the next five years are as follows:

Year	Rate
2021	\$7,344
2022	\$7,491
2023	\$7,641
2024	\$7,794
2025	\$7,950

Exploration of hosting an annual innovation and connectivity conference in Georgina

As a strategy to both maintain the momentum and interest in broadband investment in Georgina and facilitate economic recovery, it's being recommended we explore the opportunity to host an annual innovation and connectivity conference starting in 2022. This idea has been endorsed by the Economic Development Division. From a branding and investment attraction perspective, this type of conference will bring national attention to Georgina, showcasing us a progressive and innovative municipality.

The Town supported funding applications made by YorkNet and an ISP


Part of the contract with Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc. was to leverage funding opportunities for enhancing broadband in Georgina. To date, efforts have gone into supporting YorkNet's funding applications to the federal and provincial governments through the facilitation of introductions of the RFI respondents as potential ISP partners for the submissions. The Town also provided formal letters of support to YorkNet and an ISP for their funding applications.




To maintain momentum, it is recommended the Town continue to retain industry expert Amedeo Bernardi Consulting to help implement the roadmap

Amedeo Bernardi is an industry expert, who possesses significant knowledge and expertise in broadband initiatives, strategic planning, management advisory services, and federal and provincial funding applications. Over the past two years, Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc. has assisted the Town with the preparation of the Broadband Strategy and the development of the roadmap for moving forward. Staff is proposing Council approve entering into a new contract with Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc. with an upper limit of \$40,000. The scope of the contract would include advancing the roadmap on various fronts, including supporting the initial tower leasing efforts and implementation.

5. RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report serves to deliver a key action in the 2019-2023 Corporate Strategic Plan



- **Objective: Increase employment and investment in our business community**
 - Refresh the Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan
 - Refresh the Investment Attraction Strategy
- **Objective: Improve broadband and transportation connectivity**
 - Develop a Broadband Strategy
 - Explore strategies to extend Hwy 404 north into Keswick Business Park
 - Advocate for the 400/404 link
- **Objective: Promote Town identity**
 - Create a plan to strengthen Georgina's brand

6. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:

\$130,000 set aside in corporate reserves for Broadband Strategy implementation

The 2021 budget sets aside \$130,000 in corporate reserves for the implementation of the Broadband Strategy. A portion of this corporate reserve (\$40,000) is the unused balance approved by Council in 2020 for the actual development of the Broadband Strategy. Specifically, Council approved \$75,000 for the Broadband Strategy development, of which only \$35,000 was required for the current contract. As discussed above, it is recommended we use the remaining \$40,000 to fund the continued engagement of Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc.

7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:

There are no public consultation or notice requirements associated with this report.

8. CONCLUSION:

Council approved a Broadband Strategy in the spring of 2020. As a next step, a roadmap was developed to serve as a detailed blueprint for implementing the strategy. This roadmap was informed by extensive engagement of Internet Service Providers and technology companies and sets out a path for advancing the following areas:

- Exploring and expanding broadband investment attraction, partnerships and funding opportunities
- Maximizing YorkNet's dark fibre network in Georgina
- Leveraging the Town's SSCB wireless tower infrastructure
- Implementing community Wi-Fi in key locations
- Exploring and implementing broadband pilot projects
- Enhancing the Georgina broadband webpage as a key broadband information source for residents, businesses and ISPs

Important enhancements to Georgina's suite of broadband-related policies and protocols were also put in place, including the development of a new broadband wireless tower policy.

To maintain momentum with implementing the roadmap, it is recommended the Town continue to retain industry expert Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc.

In this regard, it is requested that Council approve the recommendations in Section 1 of this report.

APPROVALS

Prepared By: Olga Lawton, PMP
Lead, Corporate Strategy

Recommended By: Shawn Nastke, RPP, MCIP
Head, Corporate Service Delivery Excellence

Approved By: David Reddon
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Progress Report: Broadband Strategy