The Township of The Archipelago

Information Report to Council

Report No.: Connectivity 2024-10   **Date:** December 12, 2024

Originator: Joe Villeneuve, Manager of Innovation & Technology

Subject: Connectivity – Activity Report (December 2024)

BACKGROUND

Connectivity interests and efforts throughout 2024 were predominately associated with the Province's ***Accelerated High Speed Internet Program (AHSIP)*** for application-based Designated Broadband Projects. This program is part of the support for the government's $4-billion commitment to providing accessible high-speed internet to every region of Ontario by the end of 2025**.**

For a more comprehensive overview of the program please refer to the May debrief report regarding the Accelerated High Speed Internet Program https://bit.ly/3XQY01G
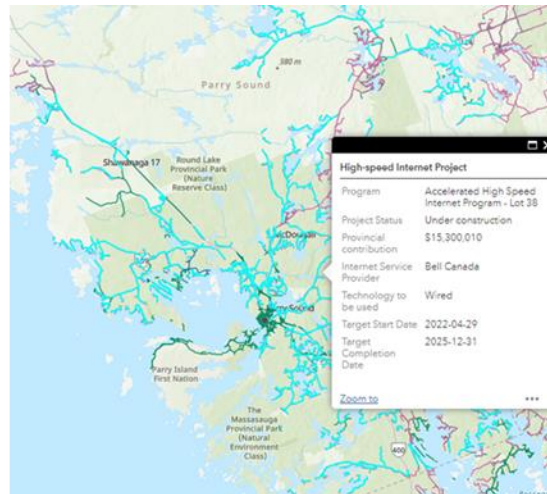
In response to AHSIP project developments and needs, Township staff transitioned 2024 work plans and prioritized efforts in reaction to significant AHSIP activities in the Township. A summary of work tasks that resulted after January 2024 are summarized below.

- Contact and debrief with Bell's Primary Subcontractor – Pickard Construction.
- Established area municipal partner alliance with Seguin Township staff.
- Assessment of AHSIP/Bell's coverage (subsidized, in-scope, out-of-scope).
- Engagement with Ministry of Infrastructure (MOI) staff regarding project scope.
- Establishment of support/collaboration with regional advocate Blue Sky Net.
- Refocusing of ISP (Vianet) interests in alignment with possible future AHSIP funding.
- Development of the Municipal Consent process.
- Review of Municipal Consent applications.
- Establishment of essential communications to ratepayers (modified Bell Communication).
- Active communication, engagement and support with Township property owners.
- Delegation/debrief with MPP G. Smith regarding Township and region AHSIP interests.
- Correspondence to the Minister of Infrastructure (Minister Surma) regarding area support.
- Participation in the establishment of the Canadore College program course "Working in Broadband, Broadband Infrastructure Planning & Deployment".
- Staff conducted a visit to Dura-line facilities in Bracebridge to gain best practice knowledge around materials for the buildout of infrastructure.
- Review of Municipal Access Agreement (MAA) developed by AMO/ROMA.
- Project preparation (Pointe au Baril offshore) for AHSIP-secondary funding.

Program progress in the Township of The Archipelago

December 2024 – The Township of The Archipelago has experienced new broadband infrastructure buildouts primarily in the southern portion of the Township. The north portion of the Township is still in design and planning phases. There is a deliberate south-to-north progression of the work that Bell and sub-contractors are performing. Across the south, contractors have been widely observed installing new fibre optic infrastructure using Township roads and waterways. There are no reports of residents being able to access new services through any new infrastructure. There is a time lag from infrastructure build to service roll-out that residents and staff are trying to assess and seek clarification on.

Bell is the internet service provider that has signed agreements with the Ontario Provincial Government to complete the build of new infrastructure in the Township of The Archipelago. Bell's subcontractors – *Pickard Construction, UTS, GTel, Mike's Communication, VistaCare Communications* - are some company names Township residents might observe fulfilling aspects of work associated with this project.

Ratepayers are invited to ask questions with the field crews observed working in their area and apply their knowledge of property markers near the water. Any individuals wishing to inquire about the temporary placement of any flag or stake may contact **Craig Thompson, Project Manager, Pickard Construction** at (705) 790-5323 and cthompson@pickardconstruction.com.

Craig Thompson
Project Manager
Cell: 705-790-5323
Email: cthompson@pickardconstruction.com

Property boundary flagging has been observed widely across the township. Property markers (survey pins/posts) are being located and flagged to assist with the design and layout of future fibre optic infrastructure.
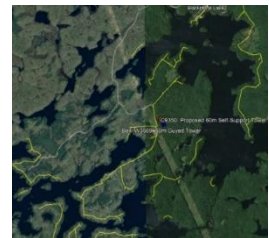

Affected residents should receive BELL correspondence (Construction Notice, Infrastructure Upgrade or Submarine Servicing) to inform them of planned work to, or around their property. Property owners associated with this phase of the project have reported receiving notices via mail to registered mailing addresses and/or notices left on the physical Archipelago residence door.

Township Council and staff have encouraged property owners to get involved in any notification for work or service and leverage the infrastructure investment to their property.

CONNECTIVITY NEXT STEPS & ON GOING

1) Township staff continue to monitor progress of the AHSIP initiative and resulting activities in the Township. Through the Municipal Consent application process, the Township can monitor application requests to use municipal lands (road shoulders, shore road allowances and concession road allowances) to support new infrastructure equipment in both the north and south Archipelago.

2) Staff have engaged with Blue Sky Net and Vianet to discuss options and interests for funding opportunities that might support any AHSIP/Bell "out-of-scope" areas.

3) Interests by Rogers - through its consulting agent Forbes - to erect a new 60m tower on Blackstone-Crane Lake Road have been supported by Township Council and it is expected that a construction start will be mid-2025.
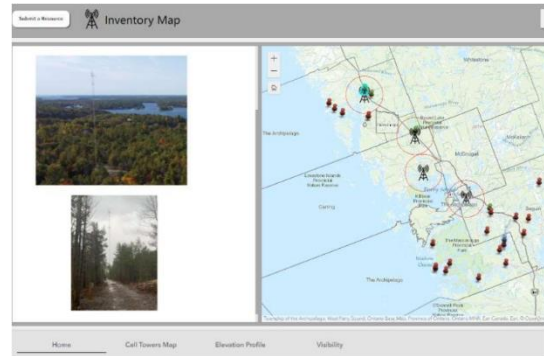

4) Earlier (2022) interests by Bell to erect a new tower on Crown Land between Healey Lake and Kapikog Lake have been paused with no further explanation or revised timelines.

Map of Proposed Location

5) Staff will revisit 2024 projects (including Township infrastructure/asset management plans) to gather new information around AHSIP coverage with the intent to leverage existing resources and engage ISPs to advance services and solutions that increase the connectivity possibilities and choices for our residents.

Infrastructure and an OPEN ACCESS model to support connectivity growth in the West Parry Sound area.

6) Staff will continue to update the Township website's Internet Connectivity page with news and pertinent information: https://www.thearchipelago.on.ca/p/internet-connectivity

---

Respectfully Submitted,

I concur with this report.

_____

Joe Villeneuve
Manager of Innovation & Technology

_____

Shauna Lehtimaki
Director, Legislative & Information Services

_____

John B. Fior
CAO