

Executive Summary

This report introduces how the City is working to enhance broadband capacity across the community and highlights that the Mayor recently issued a letter of support for an application to the Federal Government's 'CRTC Broadband Fund'.

In response to Council's strategic priority of, 'Support private, Provincial and Federal programs to improve rural broadband', City staff are leading a collaborative effort with other public and private sector partners to identify priority areas for broadband improvement and then to pursue mechanisms to fund these improvements. This includes actively pursuing Federal and Provincial funding as it is announced.

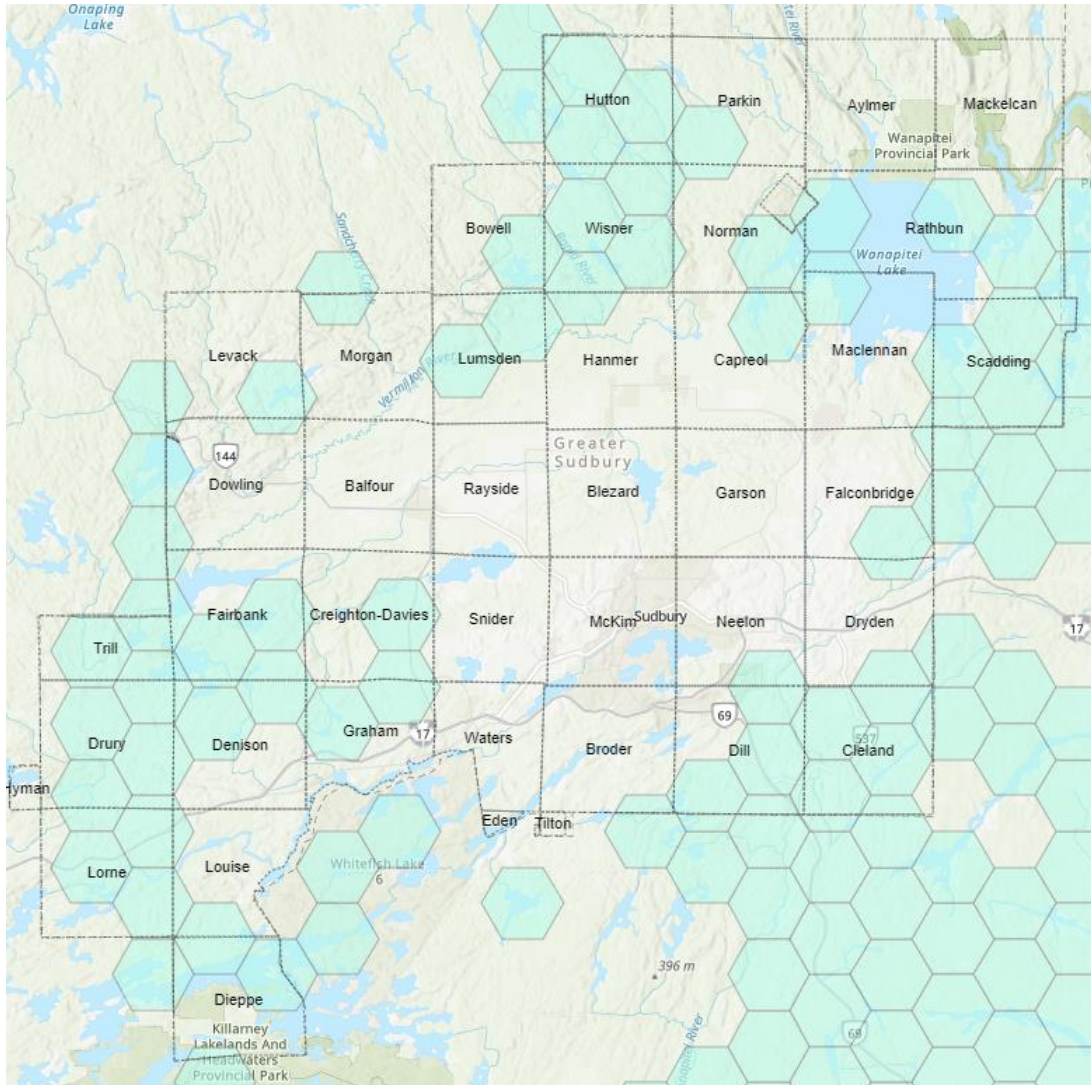
One of the City's partners is Blue Sky Net, an organization funded by FedNor to prepare broadband improvement funding applications. Blue Sky Net helped prepare an application that addresses parts of our City, in time to meet the most recent deadline for the 'CRTC Broadband Fund'.

An earlier version of this report is attached for Council's ease of reference. It was originally published on the March 10th City Council agenda and deferred with a number of other reports in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic response. That report contained a resolution indicating Council support for Blue Sky Net's request for proposal and submission to the CRTC. The deadline for applications to the CRTC broadband fund was originally March 27, 2020. This deadline was extended twice by the Federal government, first to April 30th and then to June 1st. To assure we met the deadline and to indicate our support, which many of our public sector partners did as well, Mayor Bigger signed a letter of support in lieu of the Council resolution and that letter is also attached to this report.

Background

This background section provides a summary of the latest CRTC Broadband Fund application process and the resultant underserved areas of the City that will be covered by the latest application.

First the CRTC provided a map of funding eligible hexagons (in green below), each a 25 Km area, covering populated, underserved areas across Canada.



Second our local group which included internet user organizations and internet service providers identified priority hexagons in our area.

Next, Blue Sky Net following CRTC guidelines facilitated the creation of an application, and this required an internet service provider to propose a solution they would build and to identify the areas they would service.

This resulted in an application that addresses some but not all of our priority areas. The areas it proposes to address are: Township of Cleland, Township of Dill, Wahanapitei Lake west side, Wahanapitei Reserve No. 11, Township of Waldon (Fairbank Lake), and Township of Wisner.

The Mayor's letter and the earlier Management Report on this topic are included as an attachment for further background.

Conclusion

The CRTC Broadband Fund is only one source of funds. To achieve the Internet capacity the community needs, the City plans to continue to work with local public and private sector partners cited above and invites others. The City will actively pursue and be open to pursuing other funding opportunities. Expect this to take years of continuous effort.