



## **Q & A: High Speed Internet Access in Haldimand County**

**Q1: What is Haldimand County doing to bring high speed internet access to all of its communities – especially rural areas?**

A1: Haldimand County Council acknowledges the importance of making high speed internet access available to all Haldimand County residents – especially in rural areas. Haldimand County staff have been actively working to formalize a plan that will bring high-speed internet to all communities in the County.

**Q2: How long will it take to install fibre optic cables throughout Haldimand communities? When will I be able to get high speed wireless internet in my community?**

A2: Staff expect to bring forward a formal plan and proposal to Council this Fall. A local firm, Metro Loop has already successfully installed fibre optic cable in Caledonia including the Empire Avalon development with plans to extend fibre into Cayuga this summer. The goal is to provide all residents with access to high speed internet through a combination of fibre optic cables and wireless transmission within the next 5 years.

**Q3: Norfolk County just announced that it is partnering with SWIFT (Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology) to bring high speed internet access to its rural residents. What is SWIFT, and why is Haldimand not tapping in to this partnership?**

A3: Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) is a not-for-profit corporation initiated by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, a group of 15 municipalities. SWIFT is focused on improving connectivity in Southwestern Ontario, Caledon and the Niagara Region. The project is delivered with support from the Province of Ontario and other levels of government. The Province has pledged \$63.7 million (1/3 cost share), or 1% of the total implementation cost, which is estimated at \$1 billion. The remaining 2/3 of the cost must be covered by partner municipalities.

Haldimand County was presented the opportunity to partner with SWIFT and investigated the opportunity carefully. Ultimately, the County declined due to a number of reasons;



- In order to participate in the SWIFT project, municipalities were required to provide an up-front, non-refundable investment to cover the costs of a feasibility study, plus an additional non-refundable investment as a project start-up contribution.
- The swift program ranked Municipalities in priority order with Haldimand County placed near the very bottom. The SWIFT program also required that municipalities cost share at a minimum 1/3 of the installation cost projected to be in the tens of millions.
- In 2015, SWIFT communicated that its goal was to bring high speed wireless access to communities in Southwestern Ontario by the year 2040. This lengthy timeframe was concerning to Haldimand County Council & staff and it was determined that an expedited, more timely solution was required. Research and analysis of other solutions began.

**Q4) Does the SWIFT project mean that wireless internet will be coming to all households in Southwestern Ontario?**

A4) No. SWIFT will bring main trunk fibre services to communities, which will hopefully be utilized by Telecom providers in the future.

**Q5) Will Haldimand County taxpayers be affected by this decision to not partner with SWIFT? Can a tax increase be expected as a result of bringing high speed internet to all areas of the County?**

A5) It is too early in the process for staff to answer this question. Staff expect to bring proposals to Council in fall 2019 while work on this initiative continues throughout the summer.

Haldimand County will continue to explore all options for bringing high speed internet to its communities. Comprehensive financial evaluations will be conducted for all possible solutions.

It is possible that some options will not have a negative financial impact on the tax payers and may even possibly result in a potential revenue source. If the County had partnered with SWIFT, there would have been a cost incurred to the County and its taxpayers with no guarantee of an end product.