

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, March 2, 2021

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO AMEND AND RENEW “FIBRE TO THE HOME” AGREEMENT WITH BELL CANADA

FROM:

Zoran Postic, Deputy City Manager, Public Works

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

This report seeks Council Authority for staff to renew and amend the “Fibre to the Home Project” Agreement with Bell Canada.

Report Highlights

- Over the past two years, Bell Canada has installed fibre optic cabling to more than 10,000 residences in selected neighbourhoods
- Leveraging lessons learned and expand on the project successes realized through the first two years of the project, Staff have reviewed and support Bell’s proposal to extend and amend the existing agreement
- Over the next four years, service will be expanded to more than 70,000 homes throughout the City

Recommendations

1. That Council authorize staff to renew and amend the “Fibre to the Home Project” Agreement with Bell Canada in a form acceptable to the City Solicitor and Deputy City Manager, Public Works; and
2. That the Deputy City Manager, Public Works be authorized to execute any documents associated with this agreement.

Background

In February 2019, the City entered into an agreement with Bell Canada to improve high-speed internet communications for the City's citizens

Bell Canada (Bell) infrastructure delivering internet service to the City's citizens in older neighbourhoods is mainly based on aging wire technology designed for land-line telephone service. The older technology limits the speed and reliability of internet service that Bell can provide. Bringing fibre optic connections all the way to a residence can improve communication speeds and reliability.

For such widespread projects, dedicated City resources to complete application reviews and issuing permits can ensure that work is completed efficiently

As part of the City's review process, Staff from the Transportation and Fleet Management Services Department review applications and project documents prepared and submitted by Bell. Permits are issued to allow the work to proceed. Staff have negotiated with Bell to determine resources needed to provide the service levels expected by Bell. Bell has agreed to fund dedicated resources for the project, including contract staff, who work directly for the City and are dedicated to support the "Fibre to the Home Project".

The project agreement sets out expectations and performance standards for both parties, including review timelines, construction timelines, data sharing, communication between the parties and a complaint resolution process to ensure project success.

During the project's first two years, approximately 10,000 residences received direct fibre optic access at their front door

The initial two years of the project are complete.

Approximately 10,000 residences now have access to more reliable and higher speed internet connections. The first phase of the project was completed in select communities throughout the City including Maple and Thornhill.

Previous Reports/Authority

Not applicable

Analysis and Options

With more people working and attending school remotely due to the COVID-19 crisis, this project has provided Citizens with better access to high-speed internet

As more people are working and attending school remotely, improved access, speed and reliability of internet connectivity is becoming increasingly important.

Extension of the agreement and associated amendments build on lessons learned through the previous project phase

Based on the work completed through the first project phase in the City, along with enhanced construction techniques, Bell is proposing an innovative installation methodology which will reduce disruption, while accelerating installations. These improvements will make the new technology available to more residences, quicker, helping to alleviate the immediate demand for improved services.

Extending the agreement for an additional four years provides Bell with project certainty, allowing the City to recruit based on longer term contract positions, making them more desirable to better candidates. These, amongst other benefits of extending the agreement, will continue to build on previous project successes and provide the City's citizens with enhanced services.

Financial Impact

City resources required to support the project are funded by Bell for the duration of the agreement, therefore there are no financial impacts to the City.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

There are no regional impacts associated with this decision.

Conclusion

Building on the successes realized through the first project phase for the "Fibre to the Home Project," executing the extension, with associated amendments, will allow the City to continue providing its citizens with technology resources to support them during the COVID-19 crisis and prepare them to adapt to the new normal as the City emerges from the crisis.

The continuation of this project will provide older neighbourhoods, throughout the City, access to high-speed internet technology, which, until recently, was limited to newer subdivisions.

For more information, please contact James Steele, Acting Director of Transportation and Fleet Management Services

Prepared by

Margie Chung, Manager, Traffic Services
Kevin Mitchell, Utility Coordinator

Approved by

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Zoran Postic', with a stylized, circular flourish at the top.

Zoran Postic, DCM Public Works

Reviewed by

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Jim Harnum, City Manager