



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Request for letter of support and funding – Broadband internet services

Date:

VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

Background:

The Western REN is our lead organization in the coordination of broadband internet improvements in our communities. As you are aware, many of our local municipalities obtained funding for Broadband improvements in their communities. We were not successful in the first round with Develop NS. In all successful applications there was a component of Municipal funding supporting the request from the Internet Service Provider.

Enclosed is a request from Bell requesting a letter of support and a municipal contribution to support their application for funding through the CRTC to bring broadband internet service (fiber to the house) to civic addresses in the following communities:

Bell is proposing two builds in the Municipality of the District of Argyle through the CRTC fund:

Build 1: 379 civic addresses

- Lower Argyle, Central Argyle, Argyle, Argyle Head

Build 2: 166 civic addresses

- Kemptville, East Kemptville, North Kemptville

We have not received the total build cost for these two builds. Bell is requesting an amount of \$325 per civic address reached. Barrington, Yarmouth and Digby have also received this request with a similar cost per civic address. The costs are higher than we expected based on early numbers being provided by the WREN through their work with the Internet Service Providers. They are also higher per property than the first round of successful applicants under the Develop NS first round. Bell confirmed that the cost to install in these areas are about 40% higher than in those applied for in the first round.

Breakdown of cost per communities.

		Kemptvilles		Argyle		Total	
	Cost per prem	# of prems	Build Cost	# of prems	Build Cost	# of prems	Build Cost
MoDA	\$325	166	\$53,950	379	\$123,175	545	\$177,125

The WREN is asking for a letter of support and a confirmation of the commitment from Council. We had budgeted a total contribution of \$400,000 for rural internet upgrades, which was our municipal portion of the project.

It appears that the budget amount will be insufficient to meet the entire community demand, due to increased costs of installation. \$400,000 is a reasonable investment when compared to other municipalities with similar size and geography.

Keep in mind that the Develop NS RFP2 applications are also underway, and that the WREN is working with Bell on closing the gaps in the remaining communities. The eligibility maps for the RFP appear to exclude some areas that we believe there is a need for service, so there is work to be done to challenge the maps information

MGA considerations:

Enabling legislation in section 65 allows investment in rural broadband.

CAO's Recommendation:

Recommend that Council approve the request for a letter of support and confirmation of funding.

Suggested motion:

Move that the Municipality support Bell's request for a letter of support and funding support for their CRTC application for federal funding for rural internet upgrades to Lower Argyle, Central Argyle, Argyle, Argyle Head and East Kemptville.