REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Rural Internet Access Program

Report Purpose
To provide the Priorities Committee with an update on the Rural Internet Access program.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals
Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents
Goal 6 - Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents
Goal 7 - Provide opportunities for public engagement and communication

Report
Since the introduction of Rural Internet Access program to now, the program has enabled work with local service providers to increase internet accessibility from less than 50% of properties to upwards of 94% in rural Strathcona County (as supported by the latest census). To date, at least 80 rural subdivisions and their surrounding areas now have access to new or improved internet services. The two participating Internet Service Providers (ISPs) report a combined increase of over 800 new customers thanks to this initiative.

Further, in partnership with the Strathcona County Library, standardized equipment has been installed in rural community halls to enhance accessibility to the users, and free internet access is being provided to all hall users. Bringing improved high-speed internet service to these facilities was welcome news for Bookmobile Library patrons, who now have access to the full suite of digital content and programming at these locations.

This program is complete and ongoing support for citizens on options for internet access will be available on the Strathcona public website and will include a listing of private sector providers. Contact information for Information Technology Services to assist residents with their options will also be provided.

A report has been prepared to present to Council for further consideration of internet access for the community. Further service enhancements relating to rural internet, if any, will be introduced through the budget process.

Council and Committee History

July 14, 2015	Update provided to Priorities Committee
December 4, 2014	Council approved the Rural Internet Accessibility Project as part of the 2015 budget, with three years of funding
July 8, 2014	Report on the Rural Internet Accessibility recommendations to Council
November 25, 2013	Council approved a Councillor Budget Request to have Information Technology Services department, make recommendations to improve the accessibility to high-speed internet for rural residents

Other Impacts
Policy: n/a
Legislative/Legal: n/a
Interdepartmental: n/a
Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Communication Plan
Strathcona County webpage will be updated directing inquiries to Information Technology Services department.

Enclosure

1	Internet tower locations map