



**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE**  
**Digital & Innovation Office**

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	April 20, 2022
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Intergovernmental Partnership to Improve Digital Infrastructure and Address the Digital Divide (CM22007) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Cyrus Tehrani Chief Digital Officer & Director of Innovation City Manager's Office
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- (a) That of Hamilton Council request the Federal Government (specifically Infrastructure Canada, Industry, Science and Economic Development (ISED):
  - (i) Ensure that incremental investments in broadband from other orders of government are made in urban areas and directed to fill gaps in the GTHA;
  - (ii) Recognize high-speed internet as an essential service, including a definition for affordability that combines fixed and mobile costs as a percentage of household income; and,
  - (iii) Collect and share local level data on assets, internet speeds, and service terminations/collection activities, in cooperation with internet service providers;
- (b) That the Hamilton Council request the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) examine supports for municipal carriers who wish to promote access to their fibre broadband networks for public and private service providers;
- (c) That the City of Hamilton Council request the Province of Ontario, specifically Infrastructure Ontario (Ministry of Infrastructure) and Ministry of Finance or appropriate designate be requested to:
  - (i) ensure that incremental investments in broadband from other orders of government are made in urban areas and directed to fill gaps in the GTHA, and

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OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

- (ii) identify provincially owned fibre assets that can be leveraged to help close the digital divide such as schools, hospitals and traffic corridors;
- (d) That the Minister of Infrastructure or appropriate designate be requested to review existing legislation to include provisions on open access to telecommunications cabling and trenching activities for all developments; and,
- (e) That a copy of Report CM22007, respecting Intergovernmental Partnership to Improve Digital Infrastructure and Address the Digital Divide, be forwarded to for information to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

GTHA municipalities have identified key policy, legislative and regulatory changes that could be made by the provincial and federal governments to better enable all governments to address the digital divide. Provincial and federal policy objectives, such as healthcare, education, economic development, and access to justice – are enhanced when more residents and businesses are connected to high-speed internet.

This report recommends City of Hamilton Council make requests to the provincial and federal governments to improve the City's ability to address the digital divide – the gap between households who have reliable and affordable access to digital technologies and the internet, and those who do not – through improved digital infrastructure, as well as for other orders of government to make policy changes and investments that will improve digital connectivity for residents and businesses.

Access to high-speed internet is necessary for residents to equitably participate in the economy and in day-to-day life. Not all residents have sufficient internet service. According to the CRTC, households in the lowest income quintile spend 5X more on telecommunications services than those in the highest income quintile. This represents approximately 9% of annual household income in the lowest tier versus 1.8% in the highest. The inability to access high-speed internet impairs residents' ability to participate in the economy, receive essential services such as education and healthcare, and participate fully in their communities. The pandemic has highlighted gaps, vulnerabilities and the need for adequate internet services to be more accessible and affordable for everyone.

Urban and rural communities are both impacted by the digital divide. In urban areas, the challenge is predominantly one of affordability and of lower quality services provided in communities where there are limited market incentives for internet service providers to invest in high capacity, and more costly infrastructure. In rural areas, in addition to affordability challenges, there is often a lack of primary digital infrastructure necessary

to connect households to high-speed internet. This is despite significant federal and provincial government investments in expanding rural digital infrastructure as well as their policy decisions and modest ongoing programs that lower costs for consumers including low-income households. Targeted investments are needed in broadband across the GTHA's urban and rural communities, including incremental investments into urban areas that are not currently benefiting from provincial and federal funding for improved digital infrastructure.

Municipal, provincial, and federal governments have an opportunity to work in partnership with each other and the private sector to bridge the digital divide and better enable residents to participate in the economic and social fabric of the region. Municipalities have a role in achieving this by leveraging municipally-owned fibre in partnership with the broader public and private sectors while ensuring deployment in the right-of-way continues to balance multiple policy objectives.

The recommendations in this report also align to existing City of Hamilton advocacy positions focused on broadband and digital equity that have been shared with government representatives including ministerial and political meetings held at both Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) through delegations and annual conferences. These are also advocacy positions shared by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Ontario Big City Mayor's Caucus.

### **Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable**

### **FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial: None

Staffing: None

Legal: None

### **BACKGROUND**

Throughout the pandemic, the City of Hamilton, joined other municipalities in the GTHA, the Ontario Big City Mayor's Caucus, The Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Federation of Canadian Municipalities to advocate on issues of common interest including community safety and financial support as well as post-pandemic economic recovery.

The GTHA Chief Administrative Officers (CAO's) and City Managers have been meeting to discuss common issues related to the pandemic emergency response and recovery. There is a recognition that there are many shared regional municipal interests and there

are benefits to bringing related staff together to share data, expertise and ideas to inform new approaches and actions on key issues that will advance recovery. Group participation includes Brampton, Burlington, Hamilton, Mississauga, Oakville, Toronto and the regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York.

From above group a Digital Infrastructure Working Group was formed in May 2021. This report contains the outcomes of the shared review and policy recommendations from the GTHA working group specifically as it relates to Digital Equity.

The participatory members of the GTHA working group over the next few months will be bringing these common sets of recommendations for endorsement to their respective councils to help provide a common advocacy position for the GTHA.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

Not applicable.

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

- GTHA Digital Infrastructure Working Group
- GTHA City Managers and CAOs
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
- Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- Planning & Economic Development
- Legal

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The recommendations in this report are the output of nine months of collaborative work via the members of the GTHA Digital Infrastructure working group. The recommendations take into account the background research, shared input, and various consultations undertaken that formed the recommendations presented in this report and are further detailed in Appendix A.

It is important to note that the recommendations are broadly focussed on digital equity, both urban and rural, and the City of Hamilton has and will continue to advocate and advance digital equity across our entire community.

## **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Not Applicable

## **ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN**

**Economic Prosperity and Growth**

Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.

**Healthy and Safe Communities**

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

**Built Environment and Infrastructure**

Hamilton is supported by state-of-the-art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix “A” – Additional Supporting Information to Report CM22007.