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Slow Internet? No Internet? What Tiny Township Is Doing to Help Solve This Dilemma.

by STEFFEN WALMA

This time last year I wrote an article for *The Tiny Cottager* outlining how the township would be addressing our internet gaps. We are still working towards improved services for our residents. That being said, we do not have any magical stories of Netflix and Zoom conference calls in the Cedar Point area... yet. Pessimists may skip this article, optimists read on.

The SWIFT (South Western Integrated Fibre Technology) initiative, a program funded by all three levels of government, launched in 2019 and has had its first shovels in the ground this year. The goal of the program is to deliver broadband fibre speeds to all of South Western Ontario, Tiny included. Our Mayor Cornell is on the SWIFT board and has recently announced that the County of Simcoe is next on the list of partners to see points of presence (POPs) developed within our geography. POPs are local access points that enable users to connect to the Internet through their Internet service provider. They contain high-speed telecommunications equipment and technologies that help connect users to the Internet.

While this is great news, there is still a lot of construction yet to happen, and even when these POPs are in place there will be a lag time in the development of infrastructure to deliver the Internet to your home.

The township's ad hoc internet committee has partnered with the North Simcoe Community Futures Corporation to investigate strategic ways to speed up the lag time between the installation of POPs and service delivery to your door. We also recognize that this service is still a few years out and have started the ball rolling to introduce stop gap measures we can implement now. In February 2020, Council passed a resolution to issue a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI). The intent of the RFEI is to engage independent service providers (ISPs) into developing additional towers and coverage in Tiny

Township. The RFEI outlines that the township is willing to provide supports to the ISPs by way of in-kind contributions and potential building subsidies.

The township is also a member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The federation advocates on behalf of its municipal partners before the federal government, and relays information back to rural municipalities. FCM and the federal government have partnered with Telesat to launch the LEO satellite program (Low Earth Orbit). You may have heard of Elon Musk doing this south of the border. Well, Canada is also on this train. By 2022, over 160 satellites will be launched providing CRTC minimum broadband services levels to everyone north of the 55th parallel. In 2023, the remaining 160 satellites will launch servicing the remainder of Canada.

These links will lead you to more information on the SWIFT initiative and LEO satellite programs:

- swiftruralbroadband.ca/
- www.telesat.com/news-events/government-canada-and-tesat-partner-bridge-canadas-digital-divide-through-low-earth

Tiny continues to work toward innovative solutions to increase broadband service in the municipality. If you have ideas or concerns, please email council@tiny.ca and we'll be sure to include them in the discussion.

COVID-19 update: The township is also aware of the press releases from Rogers and Bell regarding overage fee forgiveness for home internet use and how the message is being misinterpreted. We have issued a letter from the office of the mayor urging the providers to recognize rocket hubs as home Internet in rural settings, as there is often no alternative, and to consider forgiving the overage fees incurred to date.

Steffen Walma is Deputy Mayor of the Township of Tiny.



Coming Home to the Cottage: Georgian Bay General Hospital Is Fully Prepared

by CATHERINE HOUSTON, THUNDER BEACH

Amid significant concerns regarding the return of seasonal or weekend residents to cottage country, Georgian Bay General Hospital (GBGH) has a message for everyone in Tiny: the facility has taken a number of steps to prepare for the pandemic, and is well prepared to respond to COVID-19, taking all precautions necessary to ensure the safety of its patients, staff, physicians, volunteers, visitors and the broader community. These steps include the establishment of the COVID-19 Midland Assessment Centre, in partnership with Waypoint Centre for Mental Health and Chigamik Community Health Centre. Additionally, all non-urgent procedures have been cancelled, reducing the number of visitors to the hospital, and redeploying staff and other resources to critical areas as needed.

As of April 29, 2020, GBGH has had one COVID-19 positive case in inpatient care. This result was confirmed April 5, 2020, and the patient has since been discharged home. GBGH has also had one COVID-19 positive outpatient case, confirmed on April 3, 2020. This patient was screened and swabbed in the Emergency Department and all necessary infection and safety protocols were taken to prevent the further spread of the virus. With additional cases confirmed across the Simcoe-Muskoka region, we will likely see a growing number of cases in our region within the coming weeks.

GBGH has also taken steps towards increasing their Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity, choosing to create two

separate ICU surge spaces for COVID-19 patients, readying additional beds and purchasing necessary equipment. Though this does come at a significant cost for the GBGH Foundation, the hospital feels this equipment is critical to enabling the community to responsibly address this pandemic. The GBGH Foundation continues to do an incredible job of supporting the hospital, even as this pandemic is affecting all of us, in challenging ways.

As we see the hospital taking important steps to prepare and address community concerns, local businesses have also quickly and creatively adapted to this "new normal." Across our community, businesses have taken to serving customers curbside, moving swiftly to delivery and innovating to place their services online.

Though these are particularly trying times, our community is prepared to tackle the challenges ahead. As seasonal residents look to our cottages as a place of safety and shelter, remember to protect and support our communities and neighbours, through physical distancing, washing your hands and isolating as needed!

For more information on Georgian Bay General Hospital, and how you can support the hospital and its staff through this challenging time, please visit: <https://www.canada-helps.org/en/charities/gbgh-foundation/campaign/support-during-covid-19/>.

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