

## Background Notes from the Mayor's Desk – March 2017

### Broadband? What is it and what is Council considering with regard to Broadband?

Broadband refers to the transfer of digital information with computers, TVs, phones, and other devices, through the internet. The amount of information that can be sent refers to bandwidth. The most advanced broadband networks have almost unlimited bandwidth and send data via light signals down thin strands of glass – fibre optics. In Sundre we have internet access, but we lack the competitive upload and download speeds of larger communities – in fact, our current network is very outdated.

Council and Administration have been looking into the details associated with trying to provide broadband to Sundre for the last two years. Council passed a motion Monday, February 27th to take what we have learned to you, the public, to ask two questions: 1) Would you support and subscribe to improved broadband service in Sundre?; and 2) Do you support using tax dollars to construct a network necessary to make improved broadband happen?

Some of the reasons Council and Administration believes it's worth exploring this with you are:

1. We can do it ourselves and treat it somewhat like a utility to generate operational profits that will reduce our reliance on increasing taxes as the only way to fund future projects;
2. The Town of Sundre has proven that it can operate a successful municipally-owned utility (like our gas system);
3. Our medical community is in need of broadband now to be able to provide the best health care to patients, as current upload and download speeds are inadequate and unreliable;
4. Our business community is in need of broadband now if they want to remain competitive into the future;
5. Our economic development climate is held back with current internet service levels, while other, more progressive communities are attracting growth with broadband initiatives;
6. Rather than having your monthly bill payment go out of the community to pay shareholders somewhere else, you could support your local "Town owned" wholesale broadband network - and have your money stay in the community with "profits" being used to assist in keeping taxes down or paying for upcoming projects.

Administration looked at various business models, including a completely private network, to the Town initiating its own internet service like O-Net. The model the Town has found to be most profitable, while remaining risk-averse, is where the Town would develop a broadband system that would then wholesale network access to private providers like Shaw or O-Net, in order to spur competition. The Town would earn a substantial fee from each provider, based on the number of customers they sign up. Administration has provided a very conservative business case outlining how much a project like this might cost, and what the return on that investment might be if there were a certain percentage of commitment to subscribe to the service from businesses and residents. That is why we need to come to you - to ask if you would commit to signing up for TV, telephone and internet service, and whether you believe it is a good idea to use your tax dollars to build a broadband network for future "return on investment" opportunities.

You will want to know what it would cost you for service, what the quality of that service would be, how it would compare with Telus and other providers already here, and you will have other questions and concerns, I'm sure.

Please watch for upcoming open houses, door to door canvassers, surveys and information sessions in the next few months. Please talk with Councillors about your thoughts and questions. The public, the medical and business communities and other affected groups will be consulted. Should the public say "yes we will support this venture," and "it is a good idea to use tax dollars to fund the project," the earliest construction would be in 2018.

Please call me at [403-559-7352](tel:403-559-7352) if you would like to speak further about this, or any other topic.

Terry Leslie, Mayor  
Town of Sundre