TORONTO

**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Establishing a Connectivity Advisory Group (CAG)

Date:	August 26, 2015
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development and Culture
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report provides information on the concept, process and potential next steps related to the establishment of a Connectivity Advisory Group (CAG).

The concept of a CAG was referenced at the May 20th meeting in a presentation by Mark Kleinman.[1] According to Mr. Kleinman, the Mayor of London has established a Connectivity Advisory Group (CAG) to "take practical steps to ensure everyone in London has access to affordable high speed connectivity."[2]

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to work with the existing Information and Technology Advisory Panel to evaluate the value, and/or need for the establishment of a Connectivity Advisory Group (CAG), and report back on the role and expectations of such a group if it is required.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications arising from this report. Staff support for this initiative can be provided within the 2015 Council Approved Operating Budget for Economic Development and Culture.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At the May 20, 2015 Economic Development Committee meeting, ED4.4 was amended to include the following directive, in which the committee requested the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to research the possibility of forming a Connectivity Advisory Group (CAG) in Toronto and report to the Economic Development Committee about the results of the research in the 3rd quarter of 2015.

http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.ED4.4

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Based on preliminary research into the formation of a CAG, it was discovered that other jurisdictions had formed a CAG only after developing a broadband vision and strategy. The development of a vision and strategy for these regions was done as a result of various need assessment studies that were commissioned to map out the current broadband infrastructure, highlight deficiencies and review market dynamics. Following these studies, a CAG was then subsequently established to advise on the recommendations resulting from those studies.

A broadband vision and strategy should ensures that residents and businesses can participate in the global economy; adapt and grow through the use of technology; and communicate with others through the use of technology, are all important building blocks to ensure productivity and economic vitality. Broadband is also essential to improve the delivery of public services, enhance public engagement and build an atmosphere that nurtures digital innovation.

For business, broadband can provide access to research, advertising, and an opportunity to seek new global markets in order to increase export and trade opportunities. Broadband enables business to connect people and ideas, share information and work in real-time or over a period of time from anywhere in the world.

For consumers, broadband connectivity is an extraordinarily powerful tool that is already widely used for health care, work and job searches, news, shopping, personal finances, social networking, entertainment and interactions with government.

An example of some of the current broadband work that has been done recently within the city is the Waterfront Toronto Broadband Strategy. Waterfront Toronto is building one of the world's most advanced open-access, ultrabroadband fibre optic networks. With affordable and unlimited access to Internet speeds up to 500 times faster than typical North American residential networks, every home and business in the Waterfront community will be equipped to become first adopters of the technologies and applications of the future. The cutting-edge network is enabling the development of smart buildings, smart healthcare and smart education, and supports applications that promote enhanced public safety and traffic management. A broadband strategy similar to what was created for the Waterfront Area does not currently exist for the rest of the city.

COMMENTS

Currently, staff from Economic Development and Culture work with a City/Industry collaborative working group called the Innovation and Technology Advisory Panel. This Panel is convened periodically to discuss technology opportunities and challenges related to the technology sector. This group was not set up with the intention to specifically discuss connectivity and broadband, and was informally established under the previous administration. However, this Innovation and Technology Advisory Panel could be surveyed to help evaluate the value, and/or need for the establishment of a Connectivity Advisory Group (CAG), and to help determine the role and expectations if such a group is required.

If a CAG is formed, it could be set up to be similar to the model that was been developed by the Greater London Authority in the UK, where economic development staff could work in conjunction with the Information and Technology Division, and the CAG could advise on the following tasks:

- Look at the feasibility of a city-wide mapping exercise to ascertain existing levels of high speed connectivity accessibility; the barriers to provision in 'not-spots'; and identify the strategic priorities in areas to assess whether the levels of connectivity required now and in the future will be met
- Provide recommendations on how the City could monitor levels and available methods of connectivity in a responsive way on an on-going basis
- Business and consumer communities and their potential communication infrastructure needs; consider ways to aggregate demand; and explore ways to encourage the take up of high speed internet access
- How the City of Toronto and local authorities could build in connectivity requirements when developing strategic priorities for an area, considering a range of solutions, potential providers and partnerships, and technologies to meet those needs

- Review the utilization of existing infrastructure to deliver improved availability and connection speeds.

However, it should be noted that based on the London approach, a CAG was not formed until a comprehensive study was completed to identify connectivity issues and gaps in their broadband infrastructure.

CONTACT

Joe Mazzei
Sector Development Officer, Business Growth Services
Economic Development and Culture
Tel: 416-392-3482
Email: jmazzei@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Michael H. Williams, General Manager,
Economic Development and Culture

ATTACHMENT
Appendix 1: Establishing a Connectivity Advisory Group Summary

REFERENCES

[1] Mr. Kleinman was a visiting Scholar at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto in early 2015, on leave from the Greater London Authority where he leads the Mayor of London's Economic and Business Policy team.

[2]http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ITC11958%20GLA%20Connectivity%20Rating%20Scheme.pdf