

# County seeks proposals for broadband service

By Bob Owen  
lowen@xplomet.com

On the recommendation of its Director of Economic Development and Tourism, Northumberland County Council waived its purchasing bylaw on Oct. 1.

Dan Borowec explained to council that only two of the six companies which submitted bids to provide broadband Internet service for the county appeared likely to be able to fulfill the assessment criteria. He recommended that only the two, Barrett Xplore Inc. and Bell Aliant, be asked to submit proposals to install the service.

The county bylaw states that proposals greater than \$30,000 shall be advertised in general circulation.

In September, the county submitted a bid to the province for funding under the Rural Connections Program. The program was instituted by the province to stimulate extension of highspeed internet service throughout rural Ontario.

Northumberland sent out a request for information to 20 potential service providers. They were given slightly more than three weeks to provide a business model and validate projected project costs.

Six providers met the deadline and were vetted by the county-hired consulting firm Actionable Intelligence and reviewed by the county's broadband

working group.

The applicants were assessed on the merits of their ability to contribute to the cost of the project, technology to be provided, the amount of county and provincial contribution, infrastructure requirements, customer support, public access, dissemination of coverage and the time frame for provision of service.

Customer confidence was also a factor.

The broadband working group was adamant that only two respondents be asked to respond to its request for proposal as they were the most likely to be able to fulfill the assessment criteria. The broadband group did not want to create false expectations or mislead respondents.

Mr. Borowec noted the other four applicants had strengths in some areas, but they lacked all the requirements to provide a "fully operational initiative".

When asked by County CAO Bill Pyatt if the application limited other suppliers from providing service, Mr. Borowec said no: anyone can provide service.

The county's anticipated contribution to the project is slightly more than \$200,000. It has applied for \$1-million funding. There is \$6.5-million available across the province.

Fourteen municipalities applied for the Rural Connections grant money.

Mr. Pyatt asserted the county will not go forward with the project without funding.

## Police Report

Around 2 p.m. Sept. 30, Northumberland OPP responded to a break and enter on County Road 27. A suspect vehicle was stopped and one male was arrested. The Central Region Emergency Response Unit and the Canine Unit were called to search for a suspect that fled on foot. The second suspect was not been located.

William David McGaw, 29, of London ON has been charged with two charges of breach of probation, drive disqualified, break and enter and possession property obtained by crime under \$5,000. He was held in custody for a bail hearing. The stolen property was recovered.

A Brighton resident called Northumberland OPP police after someone collided into his garage. A female was arrested and has been charged with mischief, impaired driving and over 80 milligram. She is schedule to appear in court Nov. 5.

At 6 a.m. Sept. 30, Northumberland OPP responded to a motor vehicle collision south of Campbellford on Cty. Rd. 30. The vehicle and occupant were located a distance off of the road in a bush area. A female occupant was transported to Campbellford Memorial Hospital and is in stable condition.

# Director's cuts bring profits

Back in the fall of 2007, Community Services Director Terry Scott promised, in his second full year staffing the Auction Bar Jamboree, he would make substantial savings.

That has apparently happened. Overtime was eliminated, saving the township over \$1,000.

Another \$2,255 was saved thanks to the generosity of Gary Warner and Linda Grills, operators of the jamboree. Their donation of 300 chairs, combined with the provision of food service on the Keeler Centre pad floor, saved the rental cost of chairs and tables. There was an increase in alcohol sales of almost \$1,000 in 2008 over the past two years.

In the end, using figures released by the township, it appears there was a profit of \$8,043 from the jamboree this year. In 2007, according to a statement provided by the township, that profit was \$3,161.

So, at first glance, it appears there has been a substantial improvement in the profit picture. But, further study suggests no such conclusion can accurately be made.

In 2007, the township simply assumed food costs at the canteen were 40% of sales. In 2008, an accurate tally was kept and the actual cost this year was 34.4% of sales. Using the same profit margin for both years would have produced almost \$400 more profit in 2007 than the records show.

The evaluation of the profit made from catering in 2007 is difficult to determine.

When asked for a breakdown of the staffing costs for the 2007 jamboree, Cramahe Twp. Treasurer Mora Chatterson claimed not to have a breakdown of how they were allocated for part-time staff.

A Community Services Department report presented to Cramahe Twp. council fall 2007 established that \$4,580 was spent on part-time pay. However, without knowing whether the money went to catering staff, canteen, bar or maintenance staff, profits for catering can't be estimated.

Upon request, this September Mr. Scott did provide the information he had for 2007 staffing costs. None of the \$1,075 in overtime paid out in 2007 for the jamboree went to the catering staff. Of the \$4,580 spent on part-time wages, \$1,600 went to pay for the bar staff, \$780 was paid out to canteen staff and an estimated \$2,200 was paid to catering staff. The catering number is actually lower than the estimated number, as some of the catering staff assisted with the bar when needed in 2007.

Catering sales in 2007 were \$8,246. Food costs were estimated on a cost-per-meal basis and totalled \$3,255. From the records provided to the *Chronicle*, it appears the township paid staff a 15% gratuity from the \$8,246. If this is the case, then the township netted about \$1,715, or about 16%, from catering sales last year. When the staffing and food costs are taken from the canteen sales, the profit is another \$1,108. When the alcohol and wage costs are put against the bar sales, there is a profit of \$3,156 - or just under \$6,000 in total. The township adds \$1,500 in rental fees paid by the Auction Barn Jamboree. Mr. Warner and Mrs. Grills added another \$750 in the fall of 2007 which the township did not factor in its 2008 profit comparison/summary.

When the township costs of running the jamboree are subtracted from the \$8,250 in profits and rental fees, the final profit for 2007 is about \$4,630 - somewhat different than the numbers used in the September 2008 comparison statement issued by the township.

Not included in any of the profit figures provided by the township for 2006-8 are the building and regular salary costs which were used earlier this year when the township decided to drop its catering services. Including these would reduce the actual profit stated.

We can point to the September 2008 report as further evidence we are not yet getting the full picture at the Keeler Centre and further reason to be concerned about the operations of the township.

But, in the end, what really matters is that Community Services Director Terry Scott, by prudent management and the help of the jamboree organizers, saved the township close to \$4,000 this year through savings itemized above. Had that money been saved a year ago, the profit in 2007 would have exceeded this year's by a few hundred dollars.

Kudos to Mr. Scott for making a promise and keeping it.