



The Township of South Algonquin

Request for Information

for

Closing the Digital Divide in South Algonquin

Request For Information No: RFI-SA-2023-1

Issue Date: November 20, 2023

Question Deadline: December 15, 2023 2:00 p.m. ET

Response Submission Deadline: January 26, 2024 2:00 p.m. ET

**Table of Contents**

- Part 1 Introduction and Background..... 3
  - 1.1 Purpose ..... 3
  - 1.2 Potential Opportunity ..... 3
  - 1.3 Target Audience ..... 4
  - 1.4 Non-Binding Process ..... 4
  - 1.5 RFI Timetable ..... 5
  - 1.6 Inquiry ..... 5
  - 1.7 RFI Contact ..... 5
- Part 2 RFI Procedures..... 6
  - 2.1 Additional Information and the Bids and Tenders Portal..... 6
  - 2.2 Response Components ..... 6
    - 2.2.1 Response Formatting ..... 6
  - 2.3 Response Submission..... 7
  - 2.4 Interviews..... 8
  - 2.5 Response to be Retained by the Township of South Algonquin ..... 8
  - 2.6 Confidentiality and Privacy ..... 8
    - 2.6.1 Confidential Information of the Township of South Algonquin ..... 8
    - 2.6.2 Confidential Information of the Respondent ..... 8
    - 2.6.3 Personal Information ..... 9
  - 2.7 Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ..... 9
  - 2.8 Accessibility..... 9
  - 2.9 Information in RFI an Estimate ..... 10
  - 2.10 Respondents Shall Bear Their Own Costs ..... 10
- Appendix A Questionnaire ..... 11

# Request for Information

## Part 1 Introduction and Background

### 1.1 Purpose

This Request for Information (“**RFI**”) is issued by the Township of South Algonquin to gather information about supplier interest in the opportunity, as set out and defined at Section 1.2 (**Potential Opportunity**). Interested parties (each, a “**Respondent**”) are invited to respond to this RFI by submitting a written response to the Township of South Algonquin that includes a brief statement of the nature of their interest in the opportunity (the “**Response**”).

### 1.2 Potential Opportunity

The Township of South Algonquin is reviewing ways to close the digital divide in the municipality. The introduction of 5G+ cellular networks with 1 Gig fibre or microwave backhaul will enable our residents, businesses, and visitors to remain connected to their family, friends and offices while being able to enjoy the natural environment that Township of South Algonquin has to offer (the “**Potential Opportunity**”).

Through this RFI, the Township of South Algonquin intends to investigate the proposed costs and coverage to provide cellular connectivity to the areas north of Highway 60 in the Ayleen Lake area, and the Major Lake and Victoria Lake Road areas, as well as populated areas around McKenzie Lake and Hay Lake in the southern part of the township. The purpose of this RFI is to provide information and support to the Township of South Algonquin in our application for funding from the Provincial and Federal government agencies. This proposal will help expand and extend the coverage that is being provided through the Eastern Ontario Regional Network Cell Gap project to the south of Highway 60. The Township of South Algonquin is looking for recommendation on the best way to provide coverage to our township from the markets with an understanding that it is our goal to close the cellular gap and futureproof our Township. We would support a scalable infrastructure design that will allow for space for municipal attachments for public safety radio systems and municipal radio systems and provide competitively priced services to the residents, businesses and visitors of South Algonquin. The Township of South Algonquin does not have any intent in managing or maintaining these sites or the services which they may provide.

If the Township can secure public funding for the project in 2024, we would proceed with a public, open, fair and competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) to build this infrastructure.

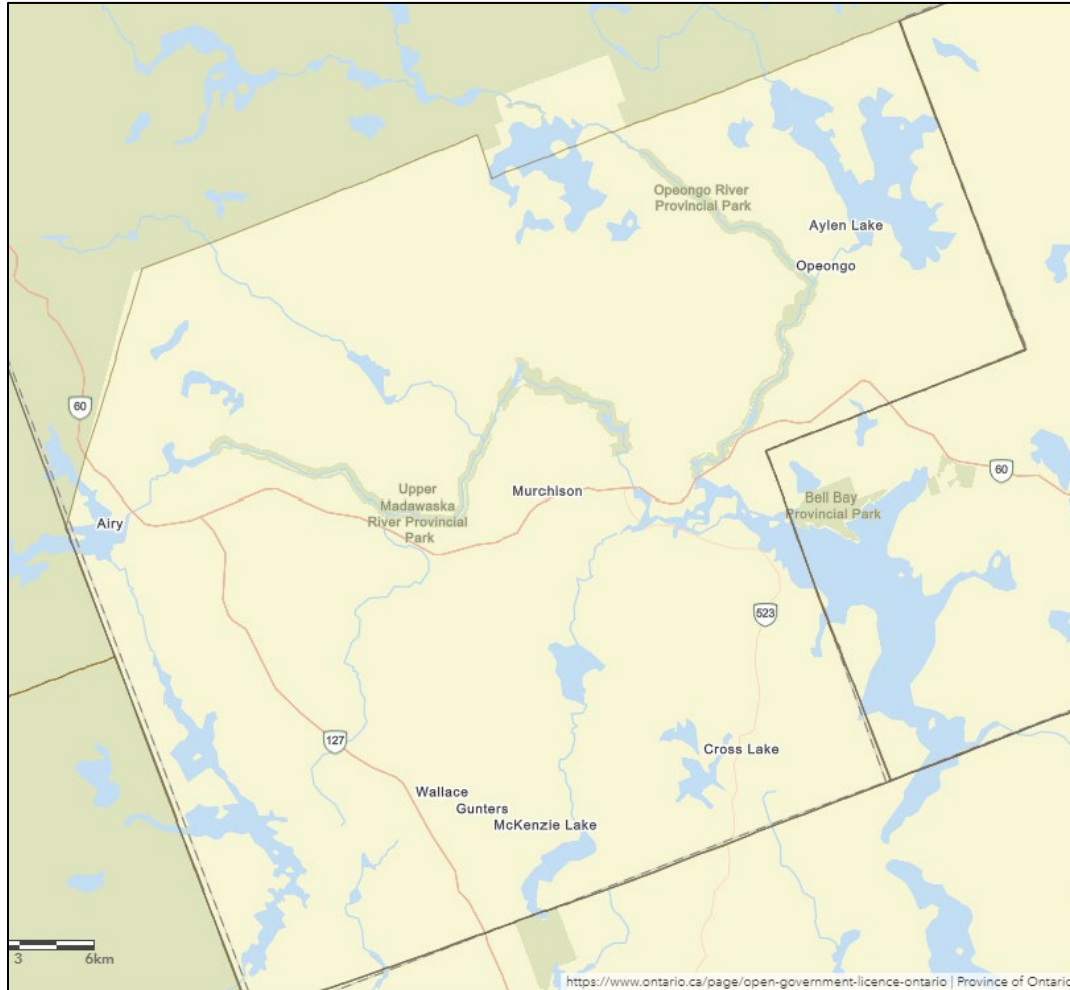


Figure 1: Township of South Algonquin

### 1.3 Target Audience

The Township of South Algonquin expects this RFI to be of interest to current mobile service providers who are also able to provide 5G+ services, and/or third-party tower building organizations and have experience working and building in remote and rural markets.

### 1.4 Non-Binding Process

This RFI is not a call for tenders or a pre-qualification exercise. It is intended to collect information only. The results may be used to inform future procurement specifications and strategies, to ensure a range of innovative solutions is considered.

Notwithstanding any other term of this document that may be interpreted otherwise, it is not the intent of the Township of South Algonquin, nor the effect of this document, to initiate a contractual relationship with any Respondent to this RFI. This is a non-binding process.

### 1.5 RFI Timetable

The following is a summary of the key dates in the RFI process:

Event	Location	Date
RFI Issue Date	Via Bids and Tenders	November 20, 2023
Clarification Deadline	Via Bids and Tenders	December 15, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. ET
Submission Deadline	Via Bids and Tenders	January 26, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. ET
Interviews (see Section 2.4 (Interviews )		February 2024

### 1.6 Inquiry

Any questions/clarifications regarding this request should be submitted online (in English) through the “Submit Question” feature of Bids and Tenders no later than December 15, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. ET

Clarification document(s) will be issued, if required. The Township of South Algonquin will be responsible for the issuing of all clarification documentation. Respondents are responsible for checking clarification documents.

### 1.7 RFI Contact

All communications with the Township of South Algonquin regarding any aspect of this RFI should be directed to the RFI Contact:

Name: Bryan Martin

Title: Chief Administrative Officer, Township of South Algonquin

clerk@southalgonquin.ca

**Note:** do not send questions to the above email address, questions shall be submitted as outlined in Section 1.6, Inquiry.

Respondents and their representatives are not permitted to contact any employees, officers, agents, elected or appointed officials or other representatives of the Township of South Algonquin, other than the RFI Contact concerning matters regarding this request. Failure to adhere to this rule may result in the disqualification of the Respondent and the rejection of the Respondent’s proposal and future submissions.

## **Part 2**

### **RFI Procedures**

#### **2.1 Additional Information and the Bids and Tenders Portal**

The Township of South Algonquin will post any supplemental information about this RFI on the Bids and Tenders platform ([www.bidsandtenders.ca](http://www.bidsandtenders.ca)) the Township of South Algonquin’s online web-based solution for issuing solicitations (the “**Portal**”).

The Township of South Algonquin may change any of the dates and times related to this RFI, including the Response Submission Deadline, in its sole discretion and without liability, cost, or penalty. If a change is made to any of the above dates and times, the Township of South Algonquin will post any such change on the Portal.

#### **2.2 Response Components**

The Respondent’s Response should be comprised of:

- (a) A completed covering page outlining the Respondent’s qualifications, experience, location, and contact information; and
- (b) A response to the questions in the questionnaire in Appendix A.
- (c) Budgetary pricing for planning purposes

##### **2.2.1 Response Formatting**

In preparing its Response, the Respondent should adhere to the following:

- (d) limit its written Response to no more than 30 pages in length – with any supplementary information (such as company profile or promotional material) submitted in a separately identified appendix (which will not count towards this requested page limit).
- (e) all pages of the Response should be numbered.
- (f) avoid using symbols in electronic file names unless directed to use them (& #, etc.)
- (g) each electronic document should not exceed 500 MB in size; information may be split up into separate documents, if necessary.
- (h) avoid using scanned copies of documents, where possible (scanned copies tend to be of greater size than original electronic versions).
- (i) no embedded hyperlinks to online literature will be reviewed.
- (j) the Response should be in English only.

### 2.3 Response Submission

All Respondents shall have a Bids and Tenders Supplier account and be registered on the Portal for this opportunity, which will enable the Respondent to download the RFI from Bids and Tenders, to receive Clarification email notifications and download all documents without the watermark “preview” on them.

To ensure receipt of the latest information and updates via email regarding this RFI, or if a Respondent has obtained this RFI Document from a third party, the onus is on the Respondent to create a Bidding System Supplier account and be registered as a Plan Taker for the RFI opportunity.

To be considered in the RFI process, a Respondent’s Response should be submitted as set out in this Section and received by the Township of South Algonquin by the Response Submission Deadline. Responses submitted in any other manner may not be considered.

- The Response is to be submitted in Microsoft Word or PDF format or a format identified by the Township of South Algonquin. The content of web sites or other external documents referred to in the Response will not be considered.
- The Response is to be uploaded through the Portal.
- For technical questions related to the use of the Portal, please email [clerk@southalgonquin.ca](mailto:clerk@southalgonquin.ca)

Important notes:

- The Response will only be visible by the Township after the Response Submission Deadline.
- Uploading large documents may take significant time, depending on the size of the file(s) and your Internet connection speed.
- You will receive an email confirmation receipt with a unique confirmation number once you finalize your Response submission.
- Minimum system requirements: Internet Explorer 11, Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, or Mozilla Firefox. JavaScript must be enabled. Browser cookies must be enabled.

We strongly recommend that you give yourself sufficient time and at least 1 full day before Response Submission Deadline to begin the uploading process and to finalize your submission.

## **2.4 Interviews**

Respondents may be invited to participate in a confidential meeting to discuss their Response. In these interviews the Respondent will also have the opportunity to share additional information regarding their experience and abilities.

The Township of South Algonquin is under no obligation to interview any or all Respondents.

The Township of South Algonquin intends that each interview will be of approximately 1 hour in duration and will be conducted in a mutually agreeable location which may include virtual.

Further details about any interviews will be provided by the Township of South Algonquin at the time the Township of South Algonquin schedules any interviews. The Township of South Algonquin anticipates that it will contact Respondents to schedule interviews within 4 weeks following the Response Submission Deadline. The Township of South Algonquin will try to accommodate a Respondent's preferred interview dates and times.

## **2.5 Response to be Retained by the Township of South Algonquin**

All Responses and accompanying documentation will not be returned to the Respondents.

## **2.6 Confidentiality and Privacy**

### **2.6.1 Confidential Information of the Township of South Algonquin**

At any time during this RFI process, the Township of South Algonquin may request that Respondents sign a confidentiality agreement in connection with matters arising out of this RFI. Respondents that decline to sign such an agreement may be ineligible to continue to participate in the RFI.

### **2.6.2 Confidential Information of the Respondent**

Except as provided otherwise in this RFI, or as may be required by applicable laws, the Township of South Algonquin will treat the Respondents' Responses (including, but not limited to pricing and product information) and any information gathered in any related process as confidential and will restrict access to such information to those of its employees or advisors who require access to the information for the purposes of this RFI and who are subject to binding confidentiality obligations.

The Township of South Algonquin does not intend to treat as confidential any information that is or becomes generally available to the public other than as a result of disclosure by the Township of South Algonquin.



### 2.6.3 Personal Information

Personal Information shall be treated as follows:

- (k) **Submission of Information** – The Respondent should not submit as part of its Response any information related to the qualifications or experience of individuals unless specifically requested. Should the Township of South Algonquin request such information, the Township of South Algonquin will treat this information in accordance with the provisions of this section and will maintain the information for a period of up to 7 years from the time of collection.
- (l) **Use** – Any Personal Information that is requested from each Respondent by the Township of South Algonquin shall only be used (i) to assist the Township of South Algonquin in deciding how to proceed with the Potential Opportunity; and (ii) for any audit of this procurement process.
- (m) **Consent** – It is the responsibility of each Respondent to obtain the consent of such individuals prior to providing the information to the Township of South Algonquin. If any Personal Information is disclosed to the Township of South Algonquin by a Respondent, the Township of South Algonquin will consider that the appropriate consents have been obtained for the disclosure to and use by the Township of South Algonquin of the requested information for the purposes described herein.

## 2.7 Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O 1990, c. M.56 applies to records in the custody or control of the Township of South Algonquin, and includes any information provided by Respondents in connection with this RFI. Such information may be subject to requests for access under that Act and can only be withheld from disclosure in specific circumstances.

A Respondent should identify any information in its Response that, if disclosed to any other person, would harm that Respondent's competitive position. Generally, only specific portions of a Response should be identified.

## 2.8 Accessibility

According to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 ("AODA"), effective January 1, 2021, all documents published on municipal websites must meet the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>) 2.0 Level AA. To ensure that these guidelines are met, the Township of South Algonquin requires all consultants to provide an AODA compliance report for all public-facing materials.

The Township of South Algonquin is committed to ensuring that accessible goods and services are purchased where accessibility would impact the successful use of the good or service by the public or staff or where a lack of accessibility would have direct impact

on the success of a Township of South Algonquin project as required under O. Reg. 191/11 of the AODA; Integrated Accessibility Standard.

## **2.9 Information in RFI an Estimate**

The Township of South Algonquin makes no representation, warranty or guarantee as to the accuracy of the information contained in this RFI. Any information contained in this RFI is for the sole purpose of indicating the general scope of the Potential Opportunity.

## **2.10 Respondents Shall Bear Their Own Costs**

Respondents shall bear all costs associated with or incurred in the preparation and presentation of its Response including, if applicable, costs incurred for presentations.

# Appendix A

## Questionnaire

### Introduction

EORN's Cell Gap Project provided increased coverage and capacity across all of Eastern Ontario, but also included improved coverage in the Township of South Algonquin (Township). This included upgrades to five existing cellular tower sites, and three new tower builds primarily providing improved road cover along Highways 60, 127 and 523 in the Township. All the project sites are colocation sites or owned and operated by the publicly procured contractor Rogers Communications Inc.

The objective of the Cell Project was to provide improved cellular coverage, and also maintain appropriate service levels for a 5-year period post project completion.

The Township of South Algonquin is looking at two possible business models for addressing the cellular and broadband connectivity issues in the Township. The Township is also looking for innovative suggestions (Model C) in addition to our two business models.

Model A: Respondent is responsible for the acquisition, design, construction of site(s) and service provision.

Model B: Respondent is responsible for the acquisition and construction of a site suitable for colocation by two or more telecom service providers.

Model C: Innovative business and technical solutions to address the Potential Opportunity including the potential for joint bids.

### Scope

As with many northern municipalities, the Township of South Algonquin is not densely populated, but the goal of this Opportunity is to reduce the coverage gap wherever possible, utilizing a public private partnership.

The focus is to look at unserved or poorly served populated areas and transportation corridors. We are interested in looking at proposals that could serve one or more than one of the following areas:

- Aylen Lake area
- Major Lake Road
- Victoria Lake Road
- Mckenzie Lake Area
- Hay Lake Area

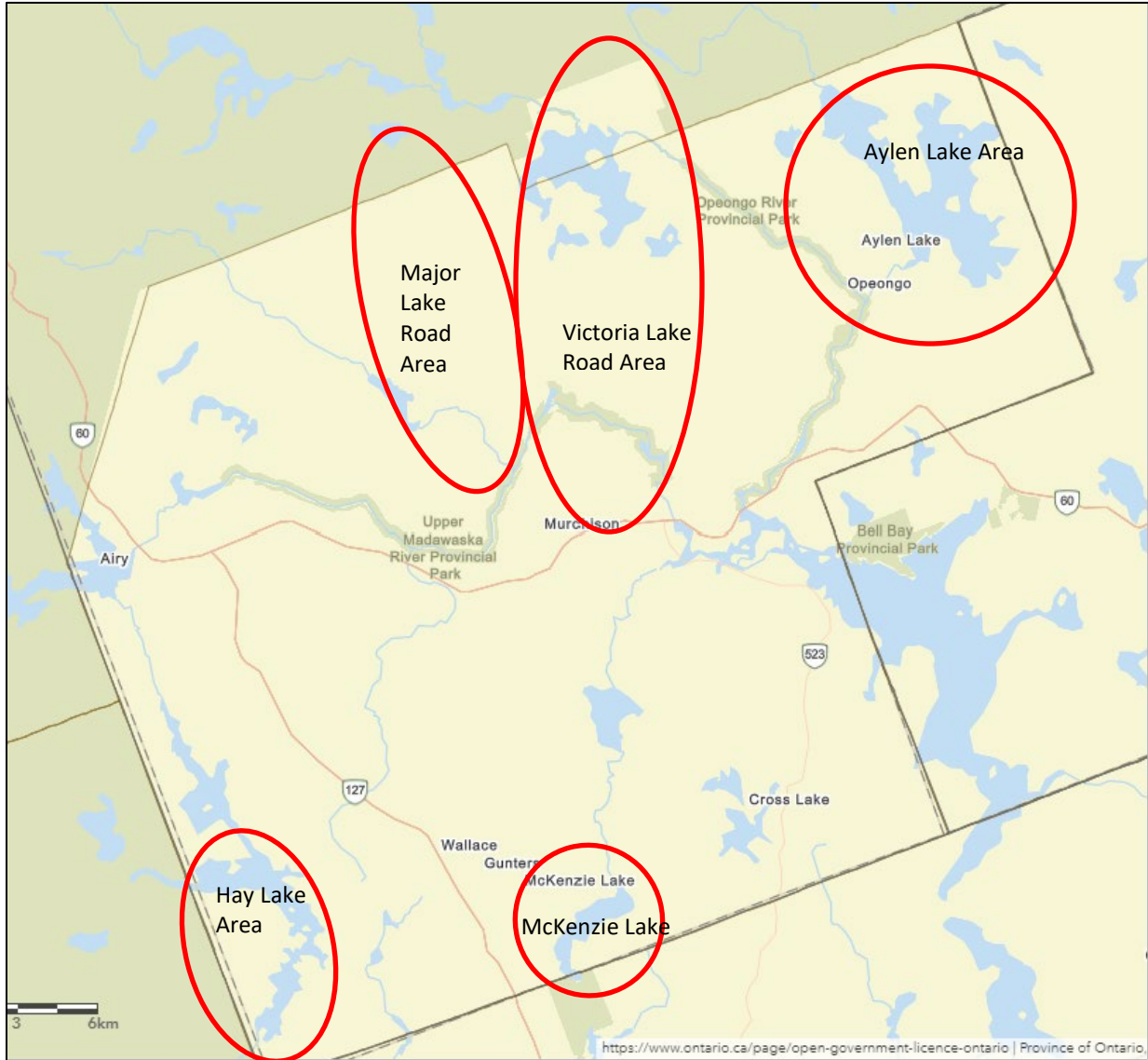


Figure 2: Major Areas of Interest



Figure 3: Northern Areas Detail

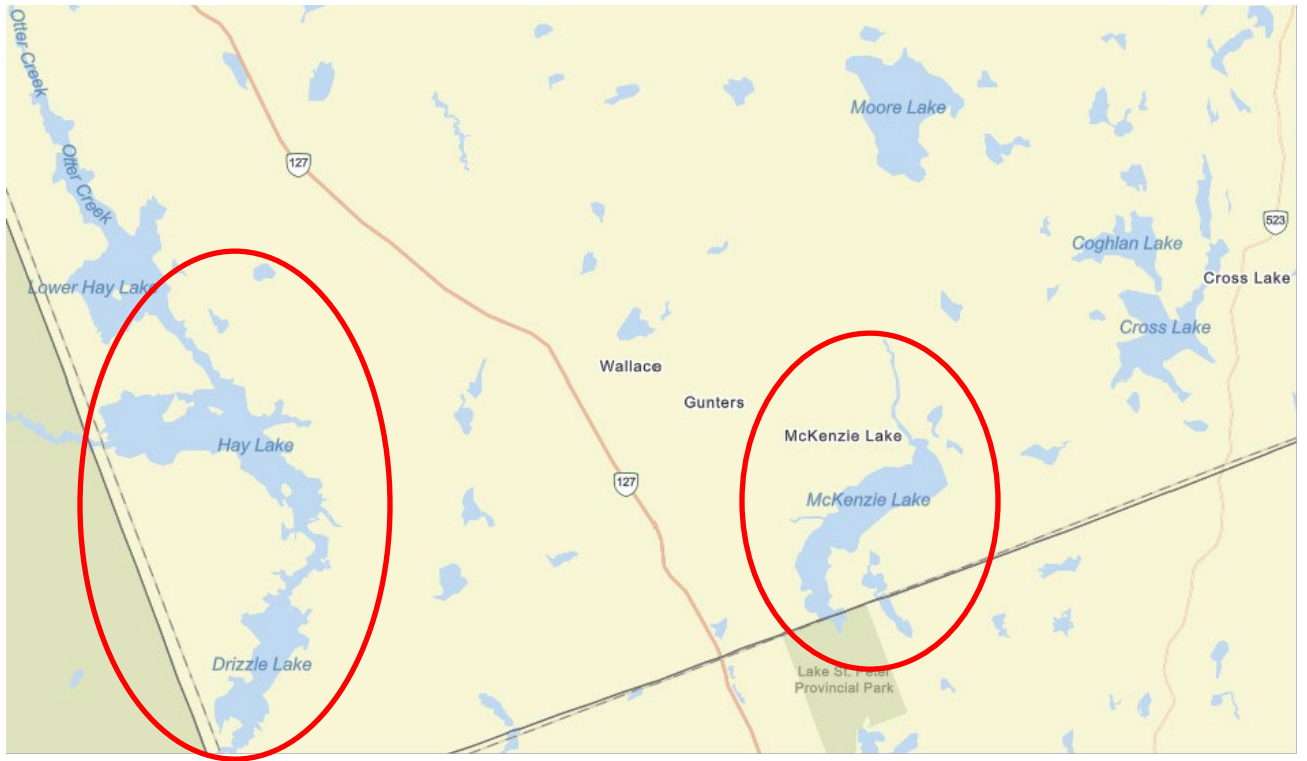


Figure 4: Southern Areas Detail

According to the ISED National Broadband map the only broadband service in the Township is limited to the communities of Whitney and Madawaska.



*Figure 5: ISED National Broadband Map - Only Service in the Municipality*

The major focus from a broadband perspective is again Aylen Lake, but providing improved service to the community of Madawaska, and broader coverage within Whitney to meet the National Service objective of 50/10 or better would be beneficial. The Township offices service levels do not meet the National Service Objective.

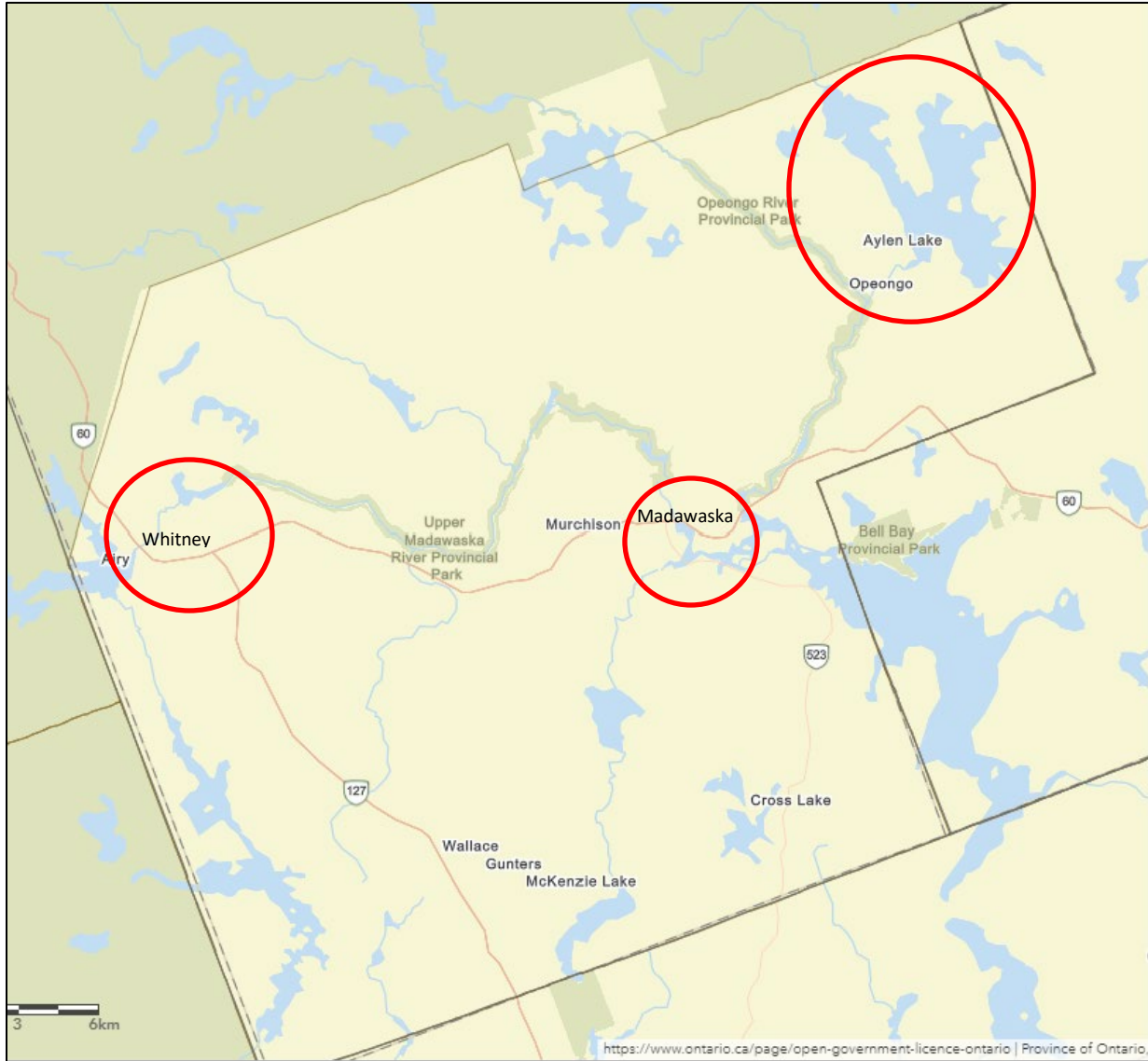


Figure 6: Broadband Interest Areas

### Service Levels

From a cellular network perspective, provide 5G and 5G+ services and potentially legacy LTE to the Service Area, with a RSRP service level of no less than -115 dBm, and ideally -107 dBm or better to the Service Area.

From a broadband perspective the objective is to exceed the Government of Canada's basic service level of 50 mbps download and 10 mbps upload. Given the existing market failure in the area, and the fact that there were no bids for the area with the Government of Ontario's Accelerated High-Speed Internet Program (AHSIP), the Township is looking for creative technical and business solutions to address the Service Area.

## Questions

Please provide responses to the general questions, as well as the model specific questions where appropriate.

- 1) What business model do you recommend for the Township to meet our Potential Opportunity, and what are the potential benefits to the Township and its residents from the specific model recommended?
- 2) Is there interest from your organization to participate in a future RFP? Is this time dependent?
- 3) What type of funding model is required if any (include high level view of percentage contribution etc.)?
- 4) If funding was obtained, what timelines would you propose for this project assuming a successful RFP award?

### Model A

A tower should be sufficiently engineered to allow at least one other carrier to co-locate and provide service, as well as a public safety provider. There should be sufficient space in the compound to allow one additional cabinet for ground-based equipment and connections.

- 1) Describe what is required from an infrastructure perspective to meet the project requirements, including number and description of sites, and overall cost estimate?
- 2) What are the expected average capital costs on a per site basis?
- 3) What would be the expectation for backhaul, and the associated capital costs?
- 4) Can you leverage the existing infrastructure in the area?
- 5) What assumptions are made from a power perspective on a site, including the possibility of off grid?
- 6) Please comment on the proposed Service Levels, and the ability of your solution to meet or exceed them. Also expand on the potential of your solution to address increased capacity demand.
- 7) What coverage does your solution provide?
- 8) Please provide details in how and with what assumptions your coverage predictions are created (including but not limited to link budget, power levels, antenna height,)

### Model B

A tower should be sufficiently engineered to allow at least two carriers to colocate and provide service, as well as a public safety provider. There should be sufficient space in the compound to allow sufficient space for multiple cabinets for ground-based equipment and connections.



- 1) Describe what is required from an infrastructure perspective to meet the project requirements, including number and description of sites, and overall cost estimate?
- 2) What are the expected average capital costs on a per site basis?
- 3) Would your proposal include any expectation for backhaul, and possible associated capital costs?
- 4) Can you leverage the existing infrastructure in the area?
- 5) What assumptions are made from a power perspective on a site, including the possibility of off-grid?
- 6) What can you do to guarantee that there will be service providers on the proposed infrastructure?

### **Model C**

- 1) Describe your business model.
- 2) How would it meet the Service Level objectives described above?
- 3) What additional requirements would you have?

### **Potential Funding Program Details**

As the Township has not identified potential government funding programs to date, there may be additional requirements laid on the Respondent(s) if awarded in a future procurement process. These may include may but are not limited to the following:

- 51% ownership of funded assets for a period of time by the Township or other government agencies
- financial sureties

- 1) Please comment on the impact of these or other previous program requirements that you have seen through government programs that may impact the success of meeting the Potential Opportunity.