

Warton sewer funding approved

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By Rob Gowan

The Town of South Bruce Peninsula has received almost 90% funding from the province for a sewer reconstruction project in Warton.

Late last week, the town received notice from the Ontario government that it was to receive \$1.7 million of a close to \$2 million project to replace sewer infrastructure and reconstruct Claude and Brown streets.

"It's great news for us. It is work that had to be done," Mayor John Close said after Tuesday's South Bruce Peninsula council meeting. "We have got the funding in place and now our public works people have to put their gloves on and get to work. It is great news."

While the town hasn't yet received anything in writing, a voicemail left for Mayor John Close on Thursday from Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs Jeff Leal confirmed the funding request had been approved. The town is now waiting for a confirmation in writing.

The municipal share of the project has been included in the town's 2013 capital budget.

Manager of Public Works Tom Gray said the project is mostly sewer replacement work, but the town will also be reconstructing the roadways at the same time. Gray said the work is basically the entire length of the streets, which are both about 680 metres long.

"The sewers are quite old in that area so they are in need of replacement," said Gray.

As soon as the municipality is notified in writing of the funding approval, Gray said a request for proposal for an engineer will be sent out.

While it is getting late in the year to begin a project, Gray is hopeful one street will be completed this year and another one next year. Under the funding requirements, the project has to be completed by the end of 2014.

"We will just have to see how quick it goes," said Gray.

South Bruce Peninsula is getting a significant amount of the funding available under the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative Capital Program. A total of \$51 million that is being made available province-wide for 2013-14 to address infrastructure needs such as the renewal, rehabilitation or replacement of roads, bridges, water and wastewater projects.

Only those municipalities that have prepared a comprehensive asset management plan or are in the process of completing one by the end of the year, were eligible for the funding. South Bruce Peninsula is preparing an asset management plan that is expected to be brought to council in October, said Director of Financial Services Michael Humble.

Ainley and Associates did a report on the town's infrastructure and details on the report will be released later this year. An interim report released last September revealed a wide array of problems with the town's sanitary and storm sewer systems. Several pipes - possibly natural gas lines - were found crossing sanitary and storm sewer pipes, there were debris, roots and/or calcite blockages so severe that pipes could not be fully inspected and there were cracks in pipes that could lead them to fail.

"These were actually a couple of projects that were very high on their list that had to be done almost immediately," said Humble. "They had to be done right now as opposed to next year or in a five-year time frame."

The town is also exploring the possibility of having federal and provincial funding earmarked for the now cancelled Sauble sewer project transferred to be used in an upgrade to the sewage lagoons in Wiarton. Since the town is implementing a septic re-inspection program, they are hopeful they can use the money to upgrade the lagoons to take on more waste from septic systems. The town has not yet heard if the plan has been accepted by the provincial and federal governments, Close said.

"We certainly are in communication with the upper levels and we are hoping we have a good enough argument to go forward with that," said Close.

Any decision to go ahead with that work would require council approval.