



## Corporation of the Township of Brock

### Staff Report to the Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Maralee Drake

**Position:** Deputy Clerk

**Title / Subject:** Request for 2025 Budget Pre-Approval – Township of Brock Website

**Date of Report:** August 12, 2024

**Date of Meeting:** August 12, 2024

**Report No:** 2024-CO-002

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#### 1.0 Issue / Origin

Staff have been advised that the current municipal website platform (iCreate) will be reaching end of life and at that time will not be supported.

2025 Budget Pre-Approval is being requested to ensure appropriate funds are in place to enter into a new contract with our website host. This is an unforeseen expense, and staff want to ensure work can begin as soon as possible to reduce any potential service disruptions. It is imperative that work begin quickly as a project of this size can take between 6-8 months to be completed and delaying may put the municipality in a situation where the current website is no longer functional.

#### 2.0 Background

The Township of Brock has utilized GHD as our website provider since May 2020. Their current platform iCreate has reached end of life status and is no longer being supported. GHD is now utilizing a new platform, Govstack, for its municipal customers' websites.

#### 3.0 Analysis

Receiving notice that the current website platform iCreate is reaching end of life was not anticipated by staff. This means an entirely new website must be created. As mentioned above, an approximate timeline for completion of this project is 6-8 months.

To move from iCreate to Govstack (while remaining a GHD customer) would be the preferred option. Included in the proposed contract is a direct migration of web pages, files, content, news subscribers,

forms and submissions from our current platform to the new website, as well as provision of existing online services. A direct migration of website content will save hundreds of hours of staff time.

The following are advantages with staying with the current website provider:

- Staff are already familiar with the current provider and anticipate that the website management process (creation, editing and publishing) will be similar.
- Less staff time will be required for training, and issues that arise with the website may be dealt with in-house before having to outsource to the provider.
- Seamless transition with limited staff time involvement compared to onboarding and building a new website with a new provider.
- Zero impact to residents and users as the general look and feel of the website will remain.

The following are potential challenges with sourcing a new website provider:

- The timelines required to source proposals from other companies, review and compare offerings and launch a new website is concerning (12-16 months)
- Potentially could leave the municipality without a functioning website as the existing contract expires end of April 2025.
- Further, moving to a new provider does not guarantee the same types of services can be provided through the website, and it is anticipated that costs would potentially be higher.
- This process would also require a large amount of staff time dedicated to developing site maps, re-creating content and undergoing training.

#### **4.0 Related Policies / Procedures**

[AC2 – Integrated Standards Accessibility Policy](#)

AP15 – Website Policy

[AP42 – Public Engagement Charter](#)

[Information Technology Systems Review and IT Strategy](#)

[Corporate Strategic Plan and Strategic Goals and Priorities](#)

#### **5.0 Financial / Budget Assessment**

The 2024 approved budget for the municipal website is \$11,900.00

Staff are requesting 2025 Budget Pre-Approval for \$43,000.00 This cost includes a one-time implementation fee of \$22,462.50 as well as an annual fee for the various website services and hosting. As existing customers of GHD, a 25% discount has been applied to the implementation fee.

Staff would draw from the IT reserve to offset any increases in 2024 and then budget the remaining operating increase in the 2025 IT budget.

At the end of 2023, the IT reserve balance was \$39,368 and the estimated year-end 2024 balance is \$58,896 (before any withdrawal relating to the municipal website)

In discussions with neighbouring municipalities, this is well below their costs for implementation of new websites.

Although annual website fees are on the rise, staff propose that the public engagement platform Let's Talk Brock could be discontinued, and those activities be hosted through the new website which would provide an annual savings of \$5,400.00.

#### **5.1 Asset Management**

N/A

#### **6.0 Climate Change Impacts**

N/A

#### **7.0 Communications**

The municipal website will continue to be found through [www.townshipofbrock.ca](http://www.townshipofbrock.ca) following the switch to a new platform.

Information will be shared with the public in the lead up to the new website launch to ensure they are aware of changes to the user experience.

#### **8.0 Conclusion**

Granting 2025 Budget Pre-Approval to begin this project with our current provider will ensure a more efficient transition, reduce required staff time dedicated to this project and provide a similar navigation experience for users. It would be unfortunate for the municipality to be in a situation where less information, public engagement and services are available online than are currently offered.

#### **9.0 Recommendation**

Be it resolved that Report 2024-CO-002, Request for 2025 Budget Pre-Approval – Township of Brock Website be received; and

That 2025 budget pre-approval be granted in the amount of \$43,000 for the creation of a new municipal website through GHD, Govstack, to be drawn from the Capital IT Reserve Fund.