



Making a difference...together

Executive Services
625 Fisgard Street, PO Box 1000
Victoria, BC V8W 2S6

T: 250.360.3125
F: 250.360.3130
www.crd.bc.ca

January 25, 2021

File: 0400-50

Strathcona Regional District
301 – 990 Cedar Street
Campbell River BC V9W 7Z8
Via Email: DLeitch@srd.ca

Attention: David Leitch, Chief Administrative Officer

Dear Mr. Leitch:

RE: Connected Coast Landing Sites and Last Mile Service for the Southern Gulf Islands

We are writing in support of the CityWest applications to the Federal Universal Broadband Fund and the Provincial Economic Recovery Intake programs for:

1. the addition of Connected Coast transport landing sites on Mayne and Galiano Islands that were previously excluded from the Connected Coast project; and
2. the construction of last mile fibre to the home projects in the communities of Mayne Island, Galiano Island, Saturna Island, and North Pender Islands.

On January 13, 2021 the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board passed resolutions of support for the Strathcona Regional District and the Connected Coast project for their efforts to secure all necessary permits within the CRD, including design and tenure agreements for landings, Points of Presence and Rights of Way. Where possible, identification of the best landing sites should be informed by the connectivity design plan currently underway for the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area (SGI).

The Board also approved in principle that funding for last mile beyond the 90% threshold will be provided by the communities to be served by the last mile projects, subject to successful service establishment and voter assent, and to mutual agreement to the terms of any required partnership agreements.

The CRD has recently completed a community based connectivity strategy for the SGI. The plan considers how greater connectivity can advance each island's common goals of sustainable economic development, community health, and resilience.

The plan demonstrates that the SGI region lags far behind the internet speeds identified by the Federal Government as a minimum standard. Internet service is inconsistent across the region; the infrastructure is outdated in many places, and has not been maintained. Where there is high speed internet, the connection is often unreliable, as it is vulnerable to frequent power outages, weather fluctuations, and varied topography that interferes with line-of-sight technologies. The persisting digital divide between urban areas and the SGI region limits residents' access to emergency services, healthcare and education, transportation, and government services.

The urgency of this need has been exemplified through the COVID-19 crisis. Without reliable internet, many people cannot work from home, video conference with colleagues, friends, or family, or access government supports on internet based application forms.

Poor connectivity is also impeding opportunities for e-commerce that would support the tourism-dependent economy of the Southern Gulf Islands, which is very badly impacted by the Provincial Orders resulting from COVID-19.

The addition of Connected Coast landing sites for Mayne and Galiano Islands and last mile proposals by CityWest support the CRD's Connectivity Plan objectives and will help us realize our goal of serving the islands with connectivity service to meet federal standards.

Sincerely,



Colin Plant
Chair, Capital Regional District Board

cc: CRD Board
Robert Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, Capital Regional District
Kristen Morley, General Manager, Corporate Services, Capital Regional District