BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Citizens' Services

INFORMATION NOTE
Advice to Minister Kang

Date: April 30, 2020   **CLIFF#:** 113068

ISSUE: Support for Southern Gulf Islands Connectivity

BACKGROUND:

The Southern Gulf Islands include Galiano, Mayne, North and South Pender Islands, Saturna, Piers and associated islands. They are an unincorporated rural Electoral Area under the jurisdiction of the Capital Regional District (CRD) and also under jurisdiction of the Islands Trust Conservancy, with legislative authority to preserves the unique environment on the Islands.

Island authorities and local connectivity advocates have been seeking solutions for improved connectivity on various islands for at least five years, often working independently.

In early 2019, the Information Communication Technologies (ICT) Division assisted local authorities to convene two sessions aimed at uniting connectivity planning efforts among the islands. During the sessions, the ICT Division outlined the connectivity needs, challenges and priorities for Island authorities to consider when developing a comprehensive connectivity plan for the islands. MLA Olsen attended the April 16 session in Sidney. Following the May 27 session on Galiano Island, the CRD took the lead on developing a regional connectivity plan for the Southern Gulf Islands, with ongoing support from the ICT Division. (Attachment 1)

The CRD conducted extensive public engagements and in January 2020 published a report which confirmed connectivity needs, broad public support for service expansion and made recommendations for moving forward (Attachment 2). The CRD has since engaged internet service providers to begin infrastructure planning. This process was interrupted by COVID-19.

An infrastructure plan and a service provider willing to provide service is a requirement for accessing infrastructure funding from the ministry's Connecting British Columbia program.

DISCUSSION:

Several conditions are necessary for BC communities with small populations to attract an internet service provider to provide service: the population must be large enough to create a sustainable revenue stream for the internet service provider, a feasible infrastructure plan must be developed and funded, and local authorities must commit to assisting the service provider to minimize barriers that can interrupt and increase costs of service deployment (i.e. ensure residents are in favour).

The CRD recognizes the value of regional planning and through engagement has confirmed need and public support.

CONCLUSION:

MLA Olsen will likely wish to brief the Minister on past challenges with accessing connectivity and current status. He may enquire about funding status and infrastructure planning criteria/updates to Connecting British Columbia program.

Attachments: 1. CRD connectivity planning timeline and ICT Division support
                 2. CRD connectivity engagement report

Contacts: Howard Randall, Executive Director, Network BC, regarding infrastructure
              Colleen McCormick, Director, Connected Communities, regarding engagement

ATTACHMENT 1:
SOUTHERN GULF ISLANDS REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY PLANNING
ACTIVITY AND SUPPORT

- April 16, 2019, half-day workshop in Sidney with MLA Olsen, Local Island Trustees & Community Champions.
- May 27, 2019, hosted a half-day workshop session with Galiano Island connectivity champions to further explore needs, challenges and priorities.
- CRD appoints Justine Starke, Manager, Southern Gulf Islands Service Delivery, as the lead for connectivity planning and a Connectivity Planning Project Charter is developed.
- Nov-14, 2019, Connected Communities participated in virtual pre-engagement meeting with the CRD planning committee to inform engagement strategy and approach.
- Nov – Dec 2019, Connected Communities provides tools for four engagement sessions (digital roadmap, community success stories, video showcases, potential connectivity use-cases based on SGI's identified priority economic sectors, etc.).
  - November 14 -
  - November 22- Mayne Island
  - November 29 - Pender Island
  - December 5 - Saturna Island
  - December 13 - Galiano Island
- Nov 13, Connected Communities was invited to participate on the broadband solutions panel at the Rural Islands Economic Forum hosted on Pender Island, that brought together 16 islands seeking to collaborate on economic opportunities. Other panelists included the Capital Regional District Southern Gulf Islands connectivity project lead, the Strathcona Regional District *Connected Coast Network lead, Shaw Communications Inc., TELUS, Beacon Wireless.*
- Nov 21, CRD promoted support of Connected Communities and its digital roadmap on CBC and offered to pay associated travel costs if Connected Communities would attend workshops and assist.
- Jan 2020, CRD Phase 1 connectivity report published.
- Jan, 2020 Phase 2 initiated, to engage a service provider in technical assessment of infrastructure options, costs and implications based on community engagement input.

Connecting SGI

Connectivity Planning for the Southern Gulf Islands

Capital Regional District
January 2020

CRD

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