



High-Speed Internet Connectivity for Coastal Communities One Step Closer to Reality

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Campbell River, BC – Earlier today, the federal Connect to Innovate program, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and the provincial Connecting British Columbia program announced that they will be funding the Strathcona Regional District's (SRD) Connected Coast project.

The \$45.4 million project, will see the placement of a sub-sea fibre-optic cable along the northern BC coastline from Prince Rupert to Vancouver and around Vancouver Island, providing 154 rural and remote communities, including 56 First Nations communities, with the opportunity to connect to the internet.

"Improved broadband connectivity has been a long-standing identified need for rural and remote coastal communities and First Nations and addressing this need is a priority for the SRD Board. We are excited about the announcement today, as once completed, the Connected Coast project will open up new economic and social opportunities for an estimated 175,000 British Columbians living in coastal BC and on Vancouver Island," says SRD Chair Michele Babchuk. "Residents will be able to access online learning and health programs, explore economic-development opportunities and participate in online communities and discussions. We would like to thank the Connect to Innovate program, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and the Connecting British Columbia program for this funding."

The Connected Coast project will also benefit Northern BC residents living in rural and remote communities west of Prince George.

"In submitting the project proposal, we became aware of an opportunity to collaborate with CityWest, an internet service provider operating in Northern BC. By connecting our networks, we will be able to provide more reliable service to both customer groups by providing a redundancy that would allow for continued service during outages," says SRD CAO David Leitch.

In the coming weeks, the SRD will be reaching out to coastal and Vancouver Island communities, First Nations, regional districts, ISPs and industry to determine needs and possible opportunities.

"One of our first priorities will be starting the public and First Nations consultation work. Once we begin to get a clearer sense of the needs and challenges, we will be able to share next steps and further information – including project timelines. This is going to be a massive undertaking for the SRD, and we are excited about the opportunities and challenges which lie ahead," added Leitch.

The Strathcona Regional District was established in 2008 to provide residents with local government services while also working to strengthen communities and support economic development. For more information about the SRD or the Connected Coast project, please contact the SRD at 250-830-6700 or visit its website at www.srd.ca.

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