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**REPORT TO ELECTORAL AREAS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2020**

SUBJECT **Province of British Columbia Connecting British Columbia and Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Broadband Fund Grants for Extending Fibre Optic Network Connectivity – Motion of Support**

ISSUE SUMMARY

TELUS is applying to the Province of British Columbia (Network BC) under the Connecting British Columbia program, and to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) under the Broadband Fund to receive funding to extend fibre optic connectivity from Jordan River to Port Renfrew in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. A letter of support from local government is required.

BACKGROUND

The 2019-2022 Board Priorities include the need to develop an advocacy strategy to ensure that all occupied properties in the region have the opportunity to access high-speed internet services. This project will provide high-speed internet service to underserved communities within the Capital Regional District (CRD).

The high cost of providing infrastructure to rural and remote communities in B.C. has been identified by municipal governments, First Nations, regional districts, regional internet service providers and community advocates as one of the key barriers to expanding internet services. The Connecting British Columbia program was established to help pay for infrastructure required to deliver high-speed internet connectivity to rural and remote areas of the province. The program is funded by the Province of British Columbia (Network BC) and is administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust. The Connecting British Columbia program is currently accepting applications for Phase Three of the program in which up to \$50 million has been made available to help internet service providers and regional and local governments connect people in rural and Indigenous communities with high-speed internet.

The CRTC's Broadband Fund, which is funded by the larger Canadian telecommunication service providers, will provide up to \$750 million over five years. The Fund supports projects to build or upgrade access and transport infrastructure to provide fixed and mobile wireless broadband Internet access services in eligible underserved areas of Canada.

The proposed project to extend high-speed internet service to Port Renfrew would be fully funded through these grant programs and the internet service provider. There is no financial commitment required on the part of the CRD.

Letters of support are also being sought by TELUS from Pacheedaht First Nation Council and Sooke School District No. 62. High-speed connectivity will provide an important level of internet service to the Port Renfrew School, library and post office, Pacheedaht administration office, and emergency services. The service will also play an important role in enhancing economic and educational opportunities in the Jordan River, Port Renfrew and Pacheedaht communities more broadly, and will benefit users of Highway 14 and the Circle Route, including tourists and island residents during extended closures of the Trans-Canada Highway.

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As part of the application process, the Province of BC (Network BC) and the CRTC require a resolution of support from the local government.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Capital Regional District provide a letter of support for the application by TELUS to the Province of British Columbia Network BC Connecting British Columbia program and to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Broadband Fund for a funding contribution towards the transport and last mile project for Jordan River – Port Renfrew.

Alternative 2

That staff be directed not to provide a letter of support for the Connecting British Columbia and Broadband Fund applications.

CONCLUSION

TELUS is applying to the Province of British Columbia (Network BC) under the Connecting British Columbia program, and to the CRTC under the Broadband Fund to receive funding to extend fibre optic connectivity from Jordan River to Port Renfrew in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. High-speed internet service will provide a higher quality of life for local residents, improved government services and enhanced safety to users of the Highway 14 and the Circle Route. No financial commitment is required on the part of the CRD; however, the application must include a resolution of support from the CRD Board.

RECOMMENDATION

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Capital Regional District provide a letter of support for the application by TELUS to the Province of British Columbia Network BC Connecting British Columbia program and to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Broadband Fund for a funding contribution towards the transport and last mile project for Jordan River – Port Renfrew.

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