REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

BROADBAND COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Thursday, May 7, 2020

PAGE NO.		ACTION
	AGENDA- May 7, 2020	**Approve**
	Supplementary Agenda	**Receive**
	MINUTES	
2- 4	**Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes - January 9, 2020**	**Approve**
	REPORT	
5-7	**Nellie Davis, Regional Economic Development Coordinator - Connecting British Columbia Funding Program: COVID-19 Response**	**Receive**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. How does the RDBN advance its 3 projects ?
2. Provincial $50 million fund for small connectivity projects
3. Provincial model for advancing connectivity in rural and remote areas

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

BROADBAND COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, January 9, 2020

PRESENT:	Chair	Michael Riis-Christianson
	Directors	Tom Greenaway Clint Lambert Andrea Newell Mark Parker Gerry Thiessen – arrived at 9:09 a.m., left at 9:46 a.m.
	Staff	Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer Cheryl Anderson, Manager of Administrative Services Nellie Davis, Regional Economic Development Coordinator John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant
	Others	Shane Brienen, District of Houston – arrived at 9:05 a.m., left at 9:43 a.m. Falko Kadenbach, Vice President, ABC Communications Jerry Petersen, Electoral Area "F" (Vanderhoof Rural) – left at 9:50 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER Chair Riis-Christianson called the meeting to order 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA Moved by Director Lambert
Seconded by Director Parker

BBC.2020-1-1 "That the Broadband Committee Agenda for January 9, 2020 be approved as amended to include in New Business – Rio Tinto."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Broadband Committee Moved by Director Parker
Meeting Minutes Seconded by Director Greenaway
– November 21, 2019

BBC.2020-1-2 "That the Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes of November 21, 2019 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATION

ABC COMMUNICATIONS – Falko Kadenbach, Vice President RE: Update – Regional LTE Project

Chair Riis-Christianson welcomed Falko Kadenbach, Vice President ABC Communications.

Mr. Falko provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

ABC Communications - Update
- Wireless Coverage
- ABC Wireless Packages
- Challenges for Rural BC
  o Low Population Density
  o Remote Locations

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

ABC COMMUNICATIONS – Falko Kadenbach, Vice President RE: Update – Regional LTE Project (Cont'd)

- o Lack of Available Backhaul Access
  - o Same Desire for Bandwidth as Urban Consumers
  - o Capital Intensive Infrastructure Construction
- LTE as a Solution
  - o Huawei
- FTTH (Fibre to the Home) as a Solution
  - Active E and GPON
- Coverage Maps
  - o Area C – limited coverage
  - o Area D
  - o Area E
  - o Area F
  - o Area G – limited coverage
- Projects in Process
  - o Cluculz lake
  - o Sinkut mountain
  - o Fraser mountain
  - o Olson Road – Southside of Francois Lake
- Project funding options
  - o Provincial Program
    - ▪ NDIT Connecting BC Program
- Federal Program
  - o CRTC Broadband Fund
- Cooperative Strategies – Discussion.

Discussion took place regarding the following:
- Verdun Mountain (TV Whitespace network) – cutting edge technology
  - o T.V. Rebroadcasting Societies – RDBN staff identified interest in utilizing infrastructure/services currently in place
- Existing solar sites and the estimated costs of developing further sites
- Challenges in regard to funding criteria
  - o Approaching government in regard to funding models that support rural and northern communities
- RDBN Broadband Study
  - o Working collaboratively to move initiatives forward
  - o Determining creative solutions
  - o ABC identifying areas and determining viability to build additional infrastructure
    - ▪ Financial feasibility considerations
- Treating fibre backbone as a utility
- Licensed 3.5 ghz spectrum scheduled to become mobile spectrum and reauctioned as part of a 5th generation (5G) deployment
- Satellite technology
- RDBN prioritizing projects and ABC's interest in further discussion.

Chair Riis-Christianson thanked Mr. Kadenbach for attending the meeting.

REPORT

RDBN Broadband Study Moved by Director Greenaway
          Seconded by Director Parker

BBC.2020-1-3   "That the Broadband Committee recommend that the Board prioritize the following projects for 2020 grant applications: Fort St. James Cellular Coverage; Buck Flats Cellular and LTE Coverage; Grassy Plains and Ootsa Lake Cellular and LTE Coverage; Industrial Cellular and LTE Coverage for Clearview Landfill, Pinkut Lake and Taltapin Lake; fibre to the home for Area B/Area E - Highway 35 and Southbank, and east end of Francois Lake."

          (All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

          Discussion took place in regard to including the east end of Francois Lake project for 2020 grant applications.

NEW BUSINESS

Invite Rio Tinto to an Upcoming Moved by Director Parker
Broadband Committee Meeting Seconded by Director Lambert

BBC.2020-1-4   "That the Boardband Committee invite Rio Tinto to an upcoming Broadband Committee meeting to discuss cellular coverage on the Southside of Francois Lake."

          (All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT   Moved by Director Parker
          Seconded by Director Lambert

BBC.2020-1-5   "That the meeting be adjourned 10:05 a.m."

          (All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

_____ _____
Michael Riis-Christianson, Chair   Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Broadband Committee

To: Committee Chair and the Broadband Committee
From: Nellie Davis, Regional Economic Development Coordinator
Date: May 7, 2020
Subject: Connecting British Columbia Funding Program: COVID-19 Response

Recommendation:

Receive.

Background:

Connectivity issues within the RDBN have been highlighted and potentially exacerbated by the physical distancing requirements implemented to combat the spread of COVID-19. This is a challenging issue given the significant timeline involved in prioritizing, designing, funding and implementing the installation or improvement of broadband infrastructure.

The Connecting British Columbia Program introduced a COVID-19 response intake for immediately implementable projects that can increase the capacity of existing infrastructure. RDBN Staff contacted all industry contacts to encourage applications to this program for projects that could benefit the region and are still awaiting response at the time of this memo.

Staff and Directors continue to work with potential industry partners and other levels of government to try to ensure that RDBN priority projects are in the design phase so that, should a funding opportunity be announced, there will be application-ready projects at that time.

Attachment:
   1. NDIT Connecting British Columbia Program: COVID-19 Response Q & A

Q&A's for Connecting British Columbia Funding Program to Support the COVID-19 Response

How is the Connecting British Columbia Funding Program supporting the need for additional connectivity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

- The Connecting British Columbia program has a short-term opening for funding applications that can be implemented immediately to upgrade networks and expand rural connectivity bandwidth and coverage where needed. This is in addition to the scheduled quarterly intakes.

Why is this special intake of the Connecting British Columbia program being announced at this time?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need to expand internet access to underserved households and communities in rural and remote areas of British Columbia.
- In this time of global uncertainty, people more than ever depend on high-speed internet access to learn, do business, access services and stay in touch with loved ones.
- This intake provides support for network upgrades that will have a positive impact in weeks or months opposed to traditional network projects that usually require years to complete.

Who will benefit from this intake?

- The program is designed to support internet service providers that require extra funding support to enable equipment upgrades to improve their network speed, capacity or coverage to benefit B.C. residents in rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

Who are the eligible applicants?

- Internet service providers including for-profit and not-for profit and other organizations based in B.C., who own and operate their own network and supply internet services to residents.

What types of projects will be funded?

- This one-time intake provides funding support for network equipment that will allow internet service providers to improve or expand their current network speed, capacity or coverage.

What is the criteria for the Connecting British Columbia COVID-19 response funding program?

- Funding available for up to 90% of eligible equipment costs.
- Preference will be for funding requests for less than 90% of eligible equipment costs and less than $50,000 in total requested funds.
- Funding available for up to 90% of 3rd party professional engineer fees to inspect and validate funded network improvements, up to a maximum of $750 in reimbursed fees.
- After project completion, internet services must be available to households at a minimum speed of 25 Mbps download and 5 Mbps upload.
- Applicants must demonstrate that projects can be completed on or before June 30, 2020.
- No advances will be given, funding is completely contingent upon project completion by the June 30, 2020 deadline. This includes a performance validation by a 3rd party professional engineer.

How much funding is available for approved projects?

- The program will fund up to 90% of eligible costs with 10% expected to come from the applicant or other sources.

What are eligible equipment upgrades?

- Eligible equipment upgrades include electronic equipment, antennas and peripherals that directly support and enhances capacity, performance or range of the network.

When is the deadline for applying?

- There is no current cut-off date to apply however, the program is only open to receiving applications that can be completed by June 30, 2020. Northern Development reserves the right to adjust intake deadlines at any time.

How do you apply for funding?

- Northern Development administers the Connecting British Columbia funding program. Applications must be sent directly to Northern Development for review and approval.
- The application form can be found here.
- Any questions regarding this intake must be in writing and addressed to Northern Development at connectingbc@northerndevelopment.bc.ca.

How quickly will the funding decisions be made?

- Given this is a program designed for rapid response, completed proposals will be evaluated as received, with an expedited turnaround time for project decisions in 3-5 business days.

Why does this program not fund transport connectivity infrastructure projects?

- This special intake of the Connecting British Columbia COVID-19 funding program is designed for rapid response, and to enable internet service providers to immediately expand or enhance service where basic last mile infrastructure already exists.
- New transport and last-mile network infrastructure projects are more complex and may take years to complete due to time-consuming processes including permitting, acquisition of resources that may not be immediately available, etc.
- Service providers that would like to submit an application for new transport and last-mile infrastructure builds are encouraged to apply to one of the Phase 3 quarterly intakes of the Connecting British Columbia program.

Is this intake contingent on leveraging funds from other federal programs?

- No, funding for this intake is not dependent on other funding programs.

Does the Province have a broadband strategy to guide connectivity investments?

- This new intake is aligned with provincial connectivity objectives (or priorities) of affordability, accessibility and speed.
- The target speed of 50/10 Mbps has been lowered to 25/5 Mbps to allow existing wireless internet service providers participate without significant and time-consuming network upgrades and delayed outcomes.

How is government supporting small business in B.C. including internet service providers?

- During a pandemic, governments at all levels have introduced funding supports for small businesses. For a list of resources, please go here for the most up-to-date information and resources.

Where can questions about the Connecting British Columbia COVID-19 funding program be directed?

- All enquiries about the Connecting British Columbia program can be directed to:

Northern Development Initiative Trust
301-1268 Fifth Avenue
Prince George, B.C. V2L 3L2
250-561-2525
connectingbc@northerndevelopment.bc.ca
www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca