



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COMMUNITY NETWORK TO IMPROVE INTERNET SERVICE TO NORTH ISLAND

COURTENAY – North Vancouver Island communities will benefit from improved and expanded high-speed internet service thanks to planned network upgrades throughout the region, in a project spearheaded by a local community group.

The Ragged Edge Community Network Society (RECNS) has been providing last mile service for underserved communities on North Vancouver Island since 2006. The Society has brought high-speed internet service to 12 communities, 375 households, three First Nations and more than 50 businesses that previously had limited or no Internet access at all.

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is contributing \$50,000 to the service upgrades. The network will be updated to meet current Industry Canada standards of 5Mbps down and 1Mbps up in more of the areas serviced by RECNS and additional backup power capability will be installed to increase reliability and service. The project will integrate the Quatsino community into the terrestrial network and provide interconnection upgrades in Sointula, Coal Harbour, Quatsino First Nation, Zeballos and Telegraph Cove. Routers and Wi-Fi service to Gilford Island and Kwicksutaineuk First Nation are also among the planned upgrades.

“Residents and visitors of all ages rely on high speed internet access in communities where they travel and reside. This is now equated with ‘quality of life’” said Marianne Mikkelsen, RECNS Chair. “Providing these services to underserved communities in our region will help to strengthen those communities by ensuring that residents have access to education, health care and other essential services which can now be accessed online.”

A recent study by the Mount Waddington Regional District found that a significant issue for economic development initiatives on the North Island is the lack and high cost of bandwidth. Despite the region’s impressive natural amenities and wildlife, ecotourism, and aboriginal tourism potential, the lack of high speed Internet capacity has significantly hindered the region’s tourism potential.

“Many businesses are run from remote rural areas in the region, and customers expect them to operate at the same level of efficiency as those in better serviced urban areas,” said ICET Chair Phil Kent. “Communities and businesses in our region cannot afford to fall far behind global standards of Internet connectivity. Improving high-speed internet service helps to level the playing field and facilitate business retention, growth and attraction in those smaller and more remote North Island communities.

The project is expected to begin in early 2016 and conclude by the end of the year.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast. ICET is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$49 million for over 140 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$271 million in incremental funding into the region.

A full overview of ICET can be found at www.islandcoastaltrust.ca

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