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Minutes of the Special Meeting of the
Southern Gulf Islands Community Economic Sustainability Commission
TANEX SGI Broadband Connectivity Study Presentation

Held April 13, 2021 by Zoom

Present: David Howe (Director), Michael Hoebel, Vice Chair (Galiano), Paul Brent, Treasurer (Saturna), Deborah Goldman (Mayne)
Staff: Kristen Morley (GM of Corporate Services), Justine Starke (Manager of Services Delivery for SGI), Liaisons: Emma Davis, Katie Dentry, Melody Pender
Presenters and Participants: Kerri-Anne Thomas (TANEx), Mike Thomas (TANEx), Ed Andrusiak,

The meeting was called to order at 1pm

Welcome and Introductions

-Welcome to this special meeting of the CESC to receive this report from TANEx Consulting.

-A top priority for Director Howe is improving internet in the SGI to attract young families and support a sustainable economy.

-Over the last few years the SGI Team developed a planning framework to encourage and incentivize improvements in investment in the SGI.

-Hired TANEx Engineering Consulting to provide us with an infrastructure design plan for how to improve broadband connectivity.

Power Point Presentation**

PP delivered by Kerri-Anne and Mike Thomas. All **bolded text indicates a slide title; only verbal comments not otherwise captured by the slides themselves are recorded here**

-What the SGI team found out in Phase 1 is that the blue on the ISED map (indicating speeds of 50/10Mbps) is overstated and not the experience for islanders.

-**Where is the CRD currently at**? If we count all the homes and businesses in the SGI, we come up with just shy of 6000 points. That's based on the GIS data provided by the CRD team. We colour coded based on what kind of service it is supposed to have. If you count up all the blue dots on that slide, representing speeds of 50/10Mbps, you have approximately 600 points, which is roughly 10% of all points. 5% of them are green dots, which is speeds of 25/5, which is pretty good service but not the federally mandated. About 85% of the dots represent the underserved, which is 5/1Mbps or less. That's a pretty high number. We took all those underserved areas and broke them into 9 "project areas".

-The provincial and federal funding programs are for those areas that don't receive 50/10Mbps, so about 90% of the SGI.

-CRD Vision developed through a working session with Kerri-Anne and CRD Team. This is where we are trying to get to. Through this, we identified a number of objectives **CRD Connectivity Objectives**.

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-**Identify the Gap** ISED says that 10% of the islands are served at 50/10Mbps.

-Broke down 6000 dots into more manageable “project areas” which are clusters of homes/businesses that need improved service.

-**Quantify the Gap** Discussion of cost to connect to fibre per home. More than ISPs are willing to invest, so need for other funding. A major underlying assumption is that Connected Coast (CC) gets built.

-**Cost Model Explanation** cost estimates are all based on fibre, fibre backbone, fibre to the home (FTTH). Hard to beat capacity and reliability of fibre, but it’s expensive to build. That’s the trade-off.

-**Minor Project Summary (ex. Whaler Bay)** Project dependency means “I can’t build this one until I build that one over there”. You need to build out the ones that don’t have dependencies first. Project density—are the homes/businesses in close proximity? Closer, less cost, further, more cost.

-**Major Project Summary** Where to put Points of Presence (PoPs), project achievability score to help prioritize projects. Demonstrated need, you could argue all areas are high need, but some have 10/2Mbps or 25/5Mbps, which are decent, even if they aren’t the federally mandated universal service objective (USO).

-**CRD SGI Summary**- We are assuming CC is already there, and we are laying fibre everywhere. We chose fibre because we are supporting the notion of open access and consumer choice. These are the numbers any ISP would be facing.

-**Main Alternatives** CC, existing wireless providers, Telus PureFibre CRD solution.

-Immediate need: capacity between islands is the constraint. The connection of concern is SSI to Pender. It is intended to be addressed by CC, but according to their schedule that’s late 2022, 2023 at best.

-Could CRD address current bottleneck between SSI and Pender, relieving at least 3000 customer’s connections. Could we speed this up?

-**FTTP Conceptual View** shows work CC is intending to do, as well as the additional landing sites on Galiano and Mayne.

-UBF eligibility map (ISED map) isn’t always right, but it drives which areas are eligible for funding and which aren’t. It’s hard to get it updated.

-**Summary of Next Steps**

1. Establish CC landing sites
2. Lobby for change in CC build schedule and get SSI/Pender bottleneck addressed
3. Confirm role of CRD
4. Consider a dedicated staff resource. Good to have as part of annual work plan.
5. Community priorities—seek proposals
6. Seek sources of funding or support applications
7. Consider P3 opportunities with a partner who is prepared to build something that would be owned by local government.

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Discussion:

-How can ongoing SGI connectivity planning be resourced? Through a FTE? Using contractors? Staffing SGI is a topical issue.

-Service Establishment is necessary if the CRD is to contribute their 10%, per agreement with CC

-Timelines and whether it actually makes sense to prioritize the SSI-Pender bottleneck, when the CRD would need to establish a service first anyways, and by the time they do that, CC will have already reached the SGI and can do it themselves.

--Other details to sort out with CC and City West, and still awaiting decisions on funding.

-Discussion about FTTH versus hybrid models. TANEx discussed hybrid model, but didn't cost it out that way because it's a ton of additional complexity.

-Whether it's a fibre, wireless or coaxial cable solution, a certain amount of infrastructure is required on the islands anyways, for example POPs. A wireless hybrid model would be some fibre down the island with some POPs along the way with perhaps like it is now with wireless to everyone's homes. Certainly that part could be broken out of the costing to say assuming everything else is the same, it wouldn't cost as much to do wireless to the homes once the POPs and fibre were put into place.

- When that link between SSI and Pender is in, there is an overnight change, but it might take a few years to get there because of approvals from fisheries, environment, permissions to get that fibre cable in place.

-There are already a number of existing providers on all these islands offering services already constrained by bandwidth and capacity on islands. When CC comes along, they are also going to benefit from that.

-If Shaw could bring more bandwidth along their existing channels that would be a relatively quick win. But from a Galiano perspective, Shaw has a small footprint on Galiano. 80-90% of the island geographically isn't served by Shaw.

-Discussion whether Telus could be convinced to open up access on Galiano to solve Galiano long before CC.

-BC Hydro is going to run a cable from SSI to Pender, and that cable was hollow. Questions whether Shaw run something through by leasing with BC Hydro, and who could approach Hydro. CRD or consultant? Maybe a role for the CRD is to pull BC Hydro into the conversation with the other parties at the table, even Connecting BC who is trying to support better connectivity in the SGI. Hydro is a Crown Corporation owned by the BC Government, maybe they want to contribute to the solution and make a difference.

-CC already has funds allocated to build link between SSI and Pender, it's just that it's 2 years away. Could it be built now and contributed back to CC later?

-Thanks to TANEx, CESC and Director Howe.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35pm

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Glossary of Terms:

CAPEX- Capital Cost Expense.

OPEX- Operational Cost Expense

CC-Connected Coast project

PoPs- Points of Presence

FTTH/FTTP- Fibre to the home/ to the premise

FTE: Full time employee