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To: prrd dc <prrd.dc@prrd.bc.ca>

Cc: Terri Henrickson <Terri.Henrickson@prrd.bc.ca>; Trevor Ouellette <Trevor.Ouellette@prrd.bc.ca>

Subject: Northwestel fibre project

Hello Chairperson Sperling,

I have reached out to PRRD staff to describe a planned project before the BC government for consideration and to request a letter of support and they suggested I reach out to you directly.

Northwestel provides Internet and landline services as far south as Upper Halfway on up to the BC border. Despite the main Alaska highway having a fibre line, residents along this route are still being served on an aging copper plant. While federal funding through the CRTC and ISED have been available for some years, it has taken a bit of coordination with the CCBC to get a proposal together that could work within the available funding parameters.

The proposal that we now have before CCBC would include residential fibre deployment to certain communities within the PRRD. Specifically, Upper Halfway, Buckinghorse, Pink Mountain, Truch and Wonowan. A basic rule of thumb in looking at an individual residence is that if it has copper service from us now in these areas, they will be converted to fibre. Along with fibre services comes access to an array of plans from data limited low-cost options similar to existing to data unlimited plans and speeds up to 500Mbps symmetrical. For many customers, the move to unlimited plans that cost a little bit more, saves them from paying overages as they experience on data limited plans. A proxy for what our tariffed rates would be for fibre served areas can be found on our website by inputting Watson Lake Yukon as your location. We are also participating in the voluntary Connecting Families program where low-income households can receive a significantly discounted service.

These speed and costs savings, along with the improved reliability of fibre opens a world of opportunities for individuals that range from better access to online health services, education, remote work and personal streaming. The latter also helps improve the attractiveness of remote areas for residency.

While the program funding is limited to residential services, we have seen in other areas that business services can also benefit from the presence of fibre in certain communities. I should underline though that this is a residential proposal and is best suited to those individuals who have existing services in community centres. Individual and part-time occupancy cabins are possible to connect, the program does not provide support for these and as such they can be cost prohibitive to connect. LEO satellite solutions are often the only option for truly remote areas.

Should program funding be confirmed in a timely manner, we would commence with the survey portion of the work this year, order expect our custom fibre to be delivered in early 2025 and service to be in place later that year. During project construction we do favour local service providers as possible for services such as brushing and lay up yards, but much of the actual hanging of fibre on the existing poles is performed by specialists. At this point in time project scope is limited to Northwestel communities along the Alaska highway as noted above (Fort St. John and Buick Creek for example are Telus communities).

Although we understood letters of support would not be required by CCBC, they have recently asked for them and identified PRRD specifically. The turn-around time request from CCBC is now for mid-May which, while we believe is tight, would help to keep us on track for an overall in service date of 2025.

Any assistance you could provide in supporting this project would be sincerely appreciated. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me,

Thank you,
Kerry

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