

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 7, 2016

IMPROVED BROADBAND ACCESS WILL SPUR ECONOMY IN CAMPBELL RIVER

COURTENAY – A new open access municipal broadband network in Campbell River, funded by the City and the Island Coastal Economic Trust, will provide businesses in the downtown core with affordable access to high-speed internet.

High-speed internet is a necessity for most of today's growth-oriented businesses, and people that depend on this technology are working beyond the boundaries of the tech sector of the economy.

Many businesses, including traditional resource-sector industries like forestry or mining have become high-tech operations that need to digitally transfer huge amounts of data like 3D renderings, detailed maps or other geographic information.

"We need to retain our existing businesses and enable them to grow in place," explained Rose Klukas, Campbell River's economic development officer. "We are also looking to attract and support technology and creative sector entrepreneurs – designers, programmers, software engineers, and more – and competitively priced, high speed broadband is a must-have."

Open access broadband networks allow multiple internet service providers to use municipally-owned infrastructure to provide services to businesses. The City of Coquitlam has the oldest open access broadband network in B.C. and currently has seven companies, including some of the larger telecom providers, providing services through their network.

"We've seen the success of this type of infrastructure investment in other comparable communities in B.C. and elsewhere," said Klukas. "Many entrepreneurs with an ability to live and work anywhere are choosing centres with beautiful locations, and Campbell River offers quality of life that is second to none."

The challenge faced by small and medium-sized businesses in communities like Campbell River is the high cost of connecting to the existing fibre optic internet backbone.

“In larger centres, those costs are shared among hundreds or even thousands of businesses, but in smaller places, that economy of scale doesn’t exist yet,” said Phil Kent, Chair of ICET. “Historically, ICET has invested in infrastructure to support business productivity and growth. This is a new way of doing that, by helping to light up existing dark fibre and leveling the playing field for business in smaller communities.”

ICET is providing a \$50,000 investment in the project, which will include the infrastructure requirements to complete an existing broadband ring and to set up a co-location space for service provider companies. The ring will provide the network integrity and capacity to deliver reliable enterprise level broadband services and will support the integration of businesses located along the perimeter.

Income generated through lease fees paid by private sector service providers will be used to make “last mile” access more affordable and to fund future expansion phases.

“Campbell River has a unique opportunity to use existing City infrastructure to start a municipal broadband network,” explained Campbell River city manager Deborah Sargent. “The grant funding from ICET supports City Council’s strategic priorities for both economic growth and downtown revitalization.”

This will be the first municipal open access broadband network on Vancouver Island and will serve as a best-practices model for other Island and Sunshine Coast communities.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million fund 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 160 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have generated over \$278 million in incremental funding into the region.

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

-end-

For further information:

Line Robert, CEO
Island Coastal Economic Trust
Tel. 250-871-7797 (Ext. 227)
line.robert@islandcoastaltrust.ca

Mayor Phil Kent, ICET Chair
City of Duncan
Tel. 250-709-0186
mayor@duncan.ca

Rose Klukas, Economic Development Officer
City of Campbell River
Tel. 250-286-5738
rose.klukas@campbellriver.ca