

Grapevine Article – October 20, 2019

In previous articles we've written about what the options for internet service on Denman and Hornby are. We've written about what the future might be like, with good internet service. Our current options for internet service are Telus and Xplornet. For a few people, in some locations, Telus Smart Hub is also an option. And they're all inadequate. None meet the recommended standard of the CRTC (the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission). They don't come close; the best test results are approximately half of the CRTC's recommendations.

The two senior levels of government have recognized the need to provide reliable high-speed internet to rural and remote communities. They've stated that this should be a right for all citizens. They've created programs to address this need, and provided some money to these programs. We want to participate in these programs, and bring high-speed internet to all of Denman and Hornby.

These government programs are only available to community-driven initiatives, not to internet service providers (ISPs), such as Telus or Shaw. The two senior governments favour partnerships between community organisations and existing ISPs. To qualify for funding, communities must take the initiative and show strong support for improved internet service and have plans to implement it.

One major project was developed by the Strathcona Regional District. This project, called the Connected Coast will run a fiber-optic trunk line up the coast to Haida Gwaii. This fiber-optic backbone, which will provide 154 communities with access to either improved or new internet service, is funded by these government programs. Although the cable will pass between Denman and Hornby, we won't be connected to it. We've asked to be included, but the list is closed. Despite support from both our MLA and MP, we have not been added. The Connected Coast system only provides back-bone. It provides a trunk feeder cable to which equipment is connected to provide local service. This local service is termed 'last mile'. It's up to the communities to organize that; the Connected Coast project plays no part in that. This isn't an insurmountable problem. Telus have run fiber-optic feeds to their COs (their little buildings). These feeds have adequate capacity. The CRTC has ruled that ISPs must sell capacity to other ISPs.

Telus has presented to us a proposal to build a high-speed fiber-optic network on Denman and Hornby Islands. Telus would pay a portion of the costs and we would jointly approach the Federal and Provincial Governments for additional funding. This would be 'last mile' service and would connect to their existing fiber-optic trunk system. Every house and business would be connected to this system, whether or not they chose to subscribe to the service. Telus have done their engineering and are ready to move forward with this.

The government expects us to investigate all the options. We hired an engineering firm, Baylink, to do this, using grant money we received from the Provincial Government. Baylink have considerable experience. They've designed a number of internet systems and are known to the government bodies administering the programs. They have designed a system for us. Their system is another possibility.

How can you help get internet? On November 3rd we will be having Open Houses on both Denman and Hornby, in the morning on Hornby, and in the afternoon on Denman. Telus and Baylink will have representatives there to explain their proposals, and answer some questions. It's likely that one or more officials from the Provincial agency providing funding will also be there. It's crucial that the government see that we want good internet, really want it. Come to the Meeting! We've arranged light refreshments and child care.

If you live on Hornby, please complete the internet survey found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RGDJ9HC>. If you live on Denman and didn't participate in the survey we conducted there, please go to the same address and complete one.

We have a website at: <https://denmanandhornbyislandsinternetcommittee.home.blog>. More information is available there.