ARTICLE FOR THE GRAPEVINE. - September 9/21

This is to provide a summary explanation and clarification about the latest developments concerning the internet on Denman and Hornby Islands. The Hornby/Denman Islands’ Internet Committee is engaged in all of the developments concerning the internet that you have been hearing about recently. The Committee is a partnership between the HICEEC organization from Hornby Island and the Denman Island Residents Association. Some further information about this partnership is available at https://hornbydenmaninternet.com .

Early this year CVRD voted to provide $142,000 to the Strathcona Regional District for involvement with the federal/provincial/SRD Connected Coast project. This payment will allow the landing at Gravelley Bay on Denman and Shingle Spit on Hornby of the enormous internet capacity that the project’s subsea trunk fibre-optic cable is bringing from Vancouver. It is anticipated that this will happen before next spring.

On August 5, BC’s Ministry of Citizens’ Services announced that it will provide up to $3.26 Million for Denman and $2.38 Million for Hornby to provide fibre connections between the Connected Coast landings and these islands’ households. The grant requires that CVRD contribute 10 percent of total project costs (estimated at $7.6 Million). https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021CITZ0046-001542. The BC grant will fund CityWest to do this “last mile” work. City West is a 110-year old telecommunications company owned by the City of Prince Rupert that presently serves that city and about a dozen other communities (Smithers, Hazelton, Terrace, Kitimat etc).

CVRD will undertake this internet service for Denman and Hornby if these communities agree through a referendum process. If the referendum (to occur November 27) passes (50% plus one vote) CVRD would enable the “last mile” service to distribute the fibre-optic cable. For this purpose CVRD would borrow $767,677. from BC Municipal Finance Authority at 3% for a 10-year term. The loan is estimated to have an annual taxation impact for island properties of $39.70 for every $500,000 of assessed value. (details at http://agendaminutes.comoxvalleyrd.ca/Agenda\_minutes/CVRDCommittees/EASC/09-Aug-21/z12Warren%20SR%20DHI%20referendum.pdf ). CVRD will be holding an Open House on each island on October 6 to fully inform our communities about the referendum process.

With referendum approval CityWest will install the “last mile” fibre connections, probably in the Spring/Summer of 2022. As an ISP, it will provide high speed internet, television and telephone at the same prices it charges elsewhere. (pricing and other service information at https://www.citywest.ca ). CityWest has agreed to return up to 20 percent of the net profits from subscriptions to ratepayers, and CVRD has indicated that if these payments exceed annual debt payments (or following the 10 year debt term), a granting program could be established to fund Denman and Hornby initiatives.

CityWest is beginning to promote its plans in our communities. It is asking property owners to indicate their willingness to allow the installation of “drops” of fibre to their homes, once CityWest has underground distribution cables on the roads. These “drops” would usually be underground and would usually be installed without charge (although properties with longer driveways may entail costs). CityWest wants these indications of willingness now so it can plan its distribution networks and schedules. Properties that don’t indicate willingness now, but do request service after the initial distribution of the fibre cable has occurred, will incur costs.

Over the past few years, we have spoken with people in communities across British Columbia and the Prairies about their experiences with internet improvement. We are told that when a new internet service is emerging in a community, existing ISPs often offer special “deals” to customers who will sign extended contracts. We advise people on Denman and Hornby Island who are interested in quality internet, television and telephone, either as individual services or in bundles, that as part of considering any “deals” they should look carefully at the services and prices CityWest provides to its customers.

Signed

Hornby/Denman Islands Internet Committee