

MEMORANDUM



TO: Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Ktunaxa Nation Council, Regional District of Central Kootenay, Regional District of East Kootenay, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary and Village of Valemount

FROM: Columbia Basin/Boundary Regional Broadband Committee

DATE: April 15, 2019

SUBJECT: Measuring the State of Broadband Connectivity in the Columbia Basin/Kootenay Boundary

Purpose:

1. This memo seeks to provide an overview of the proposed approach for gathering and measuring the state of broadband connectivity in the Columbia Basin and Boundary region and provides regional district board with the key features to be able to endorse and promote resident participation.

Regional Broadband Committee:

2. The Regional Broadband Committee (RBBC) was established in 2014 and includes elected officials from Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Ktunaxa Nation Council, Regional District of Central Kootenay, Regional District of East Kootenay, Regional District of Kootenay Boundary and Village of Valemount.
3. The mission statement of the RBBC is:
 - *The Regional Broadband Committee is a united voice to advocate for all our constituents through leadership, knowledge sharing, and a common understanding of the current and future needs of high-speed broadband internet services in the region.*

Background:

4. In Fall of 2018, the RDEK, RDCK, RDKB and CSRD formally endorsed the Columbia Basin/Kootenay Boundary Connectivity Strategy.
5. The strategy's goal is to attain at minimum the standard defined by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) Universal Service Objective (USO)¹ for the residents and businesses within Columbia Basin and Boundary regions, ideally beyond the USO, and do so in a timely manner.

¹ <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/internet/internet.htm>

The Connectivity Problem:

6. The state and magnitude of rural connectivity challenges are not generally as well known or understood.
7. Both the CRTC and the federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) collect data on the state of connectivity in Canada. The source of this data is generated primarily from self-reporting by dominant telecommunication carriers.
8. This data is used to determine community eligibility for both federal and provincial connectivity granting programs.
9. Data for the Region has at times been found to be inaccurate and sometimes understates the actual connectivity gap. Further, some underserved communities have been deemed as ineligible for vital broadband granting programs.
10. The CRTC roughly estimates the cost to adequately connect rural Canada and the North at \$7 billion.² However, this figure is calculated based on the data described above.

Quantifying the Connectivity Problem:

11. The Regional Broadband Committee has partnered with the Columbia Basin Trust's Broadband Initiative to subscribe to the Canadian Internet Registry Authority's (CIRA) Internet Performance Test.
12. A CIRA Internet Performance Testing portal has been created to capture data for the Columbia Basin/ Boundary areas <https://performance.cira.ca/columbiabasin>
13. CIRA's performance test platform aims to 'crowd source' data regarding connectivity performance directly from residents (e.g. a resident can access the testing portal and run the performance test as many times as they wish, the CIRA tools captures results of each test).
14. Data can be extracted from the portal to extrapolate the state of connectivity for the entire region, an individual Regional District, an electoral area, or a given municipality/village.

Making Residents Aware of the Performance Test Portal

15. The more data that we have for the region, the better information we can extrapolate about the true state of connectivity for our communities. This information can then be used to prioritize areas in need.

² Broadband Connectivity in Rural Canada: Overcoming the Digital Divide:
<http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/INDU/report-11>, Page 24

16. The Regional Broadband Committee would like to encourage respective councils and districts to endorse the use of the Columbia Basin/ Boundary Internet Testing Portal (the portal). Further, we encourage each regional district to utilize means at their disposal to encourage residents to use the testing portal to increase the data set for our Region. Some suggested ways of sharing this platform are included below:

- Include a short description of the portal and why residents should participate in your monthly/regular email newsletter.
- Promote the link on your social media pages.
- Introduce at your town hall meetings.
- Include a link and description of the portal on your website.

17. For further support on developing the above content, you may reach out to Emily Gilmar, Manager of Communications at Columbia Basin Trust egilmar@cbt.org.

Endorsement:

18. The RBBC seeks support from each member Board/Council in the approach stated in the memo.