
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Citizens' Services

Mount Currie, Lil'wat Nation to benefit from improved connectivity

WHISTLER – High-speed internet and other broadband services will soon be available for people in the community of Mount Currie and the Lil'wat Nation.

A new fibre-optic line will enable work to connect more homes, businesses and communities in the region.

“Closing the digital divide is vital to ensure people in rural and Indigenous communities can enjoy the immense benefits of modern connectivity, including the ability to learn and work from home, grow a business or access modern services,” said Anne Kang, B.C.’s Minister of Citizens’ Services. “Places like Mount Currie and Lil’Wat Nation are home to vibrant people who care deeply about their communities. I am excited to see the incredible benefits high-speed internet will bring to this region.”

The Whistler-to-Cache Creek project includes the construction of a 40-kilometre, fibre-optic line between Whistler and Mount Currie, to be completed in October 2020. The line will bring high-speed internet and other broadband services to the community of Mount Currie, the Lil'wat Nation and the Ts'zil Learning Centre. Future construction will benefit several other communities along the 125-kilometre fibre-optic line route, all the way to Cache Creek.

This upgrade was made possible through a grant of more than \$1.9 million from the Province’s Connecting British Columbia program, an investment of more than \$2 million from the Government of Canada’s Connect to Innovate program, and a contribution of more than \$1.6 million from Shaw Communications, the project lead.

“Access to high-speed internet will be key to our economic recovery, health and safety. We are the first government with a plan to connect every Canadian to high-speed internet,” said Maryam Monsef, federal Minister for Rural Economic Development. “We began this work pre-pandemic and will accelerate our efforts moving forward. This project will provide critical backbone infrastructure to improve connectivity in under-served communities and First Nations in rural British Columbia. To date, we have invested over \$55 million in 10 projects, which will connect over 18,000 households in communities throughout B.C.”

Local internet service providers can access the fibre-optic line to extend high-speed internet services to communities along the route. Local governments, businesses and Indigenous communities can also use the fibre for broadband services.

The benefits of this project are already being experienced in Pemberton, with people enjoying internet speeds comparable with the Lower Mainland. This provides reliable access to online tools and services for students, entrepreneurs, workers and families.

“Canadians have never been more reliant on technology than they are today and need access to high-quality, affordable broadband services to power their most important activities,” said Paul McAleese, president, Shaw Communications. “The partnerships established by the Connecting British Columbia and Connect to Innovate programs enable critical network investments that provide rural and Indigenous communities with choice and competition in accessing high-speed internet and other broadband services.”

The Province remains committed to connecting all regions of B.C. with high-speed internet and ensuring that every community and person can share in the benefits of the province’s growing digital economy.

Quotes:

Michelle Mungall, B.C.’s Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Competitiveness –

“High-speed internet opens the door to economic growth, innovation and job creation for British Columbians. Our government is proud to support these critical projects that help businesses grow, communities thrive and people make vital connections.”

Chief Dean Nelson, Lil’wat Nation –

“The Lil’wat Nation acknowledges our initial role with Shaw Communications. We also acknowledge great partnerships in all that we do, and that communication is key to understanding the needs and wishes of your partners. Apart from providing voice services to the Lil’wat Nation over the last few years, Shaw recognized opportunities to add value to the new Ts’zil Learning Centre by upgrading infrastructure, like a new generator, and providing the Lil’wat Nation access to fibre. Looking to the future, in a few short weeks, Shaw will have its new fibre line complete. This new fibre line will go past Lil’wat Nation and will provide choice and redundancy, as well as access to the Shaw services to support phone, internet and other broadband services. We look forward to further opportunities with Shaw Communications.”

Mike Richman, mayor, Village of Pemberton –

“We were pleased to see that Shaw upgraded its fibre-optic network to the Village of Pemberton. The completion of this project has allowed for a more competitive local market, enabling our community to access affordable broadband and high-speed internet services. The Shaw network has enabled our local businesses to operate to their fullest potential, allowing us to compete in the digital economy. We thank Shaw for this important investment in our community.”

Tony Rainbow, chair, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District –

“As a large geographic area, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District spans four municipalities and four rural areas, and we are well aware of the connectivity needs and challenges facing our communities – especially those that are most remote. We are excited about this project which will, upon completion, improve services for some of our rural communities. We look forward to the ongoing work being done with this project and to the day that reliable broadband service is available to all of our residents.”

Quick Facts:

- Once fully operational in 2021, the Whistler-to-Cache Creek fibre-optic line will give communities and internet service providers the opportunity to improve broadband services to Birken, Seton Lake, Tsal'alh Nation, T'it'q'et, Cayoose Creek Band, Xaxli'p, Ts'kw'ayalaxw First Nation, N'Quatqua First Nation and Bonaparte First Nation.
- The total value of the project is more than \$5.6 million.
- The Connecting British Columbia program, administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust, provides grant funding to internet service providers to plan for or build vital connectivity infrastructure. This includes projects to bring fibre to entire regions or make final connections to homes and businesses.
- The \$50-million investment in the Connecting British Columbia program, announced as part of Budget 2019, will continue to expand access to high-speed internet in rural and Indigenous communities throughout the province.

Learn More:

For more information on the Connecting BC program, visit:

<https://www.northerndevlopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/partner-programs/connecting-british-columbia/>

For background on the Government of Canada's connectivity strategy, visit: https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/139.nsf/eng/h_00002.html

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