



October 4, 2024

Ref: 122216

Chair Rob Gay
Regional District of East Kootenay
19 – 24th Avenue South
Cranbrook, B.C. V1C 3H8

Via email: director.gay@rdek.bc.ca

Dear Chair Rob Gay:

I would like to personally thank you and your delegation for meeting with Minister George Chow and Ministry staff during the 2024 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Annual Convention in Vancouver. The Province always appreciates the chance to engage in meaningful conversations with you and your teams face-to-face as we work together to connect everyone in British Columbia to high-speed internet services.

Events like the UBCM Annual Convention offer such a valuable opportunity for us to learn more about not only the successes your region has achieved over the past year, but also some of the challenges and areas for growth that are still present.

Since 2017, the B.C. Government has allocated over half a billion dollars into expanding connectivity infrastructure to communities that do not have high-speed internet or cellular services. With our federal government funding partnership, we have committed to connecting all households to high-speed internet services by 2027 and to do this requires a collaborative approach.

Thank you for providing an update on the Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation's Connect the Basin project benefitting over 5400 households. I would encourage you to continue to work with the team in the Connectivity Division to find solutions that may require a mix of technologies to connect the remaining 3000 households throughout the region.

We appreciated you sharing your concerns regarding the permitting challenges that you are experiencing which may be putting some areas of the project at risk. As mentioned in the meeting, the Ministry has established regular communication with permit-issuing ministries across government and developed processes to improve efficiency. This includes permitting for access to rights-of-way, Crown land, and passive infrastructure, such as utility poles. Staff will raise these concerns with the cross-ministry permitting table that includes the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to support some of these specific issues.

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Thank you once again for bringing attention to areas within your District that are not receiving the internet speeds reported on the National Broadband Internet Service Availability Map. Since 2021, the Province has been investigating discrepancies in speed and eligibility data after hearing concerns from communities across British Columbia that federal data may not accurately reflect the actual speeds experienced by homes, businesses, and other local sites. During the meeting, we were pleased to explain that while the Province's MOU with the federal government for joint funding agreements prevents us from overriding eligibility decisions, we have been actively addressing speed discrepancies where they exist. In cases where 50/10 Mbps services are unavailable, we are collaborating with communities and service providers to explore potential projects and funding solutions to close these service gaps.

The week at UBCM always proves invaluable for the Minister and staff to hear from you and your delegation. These opportunities for discussion allow us to not only understand the issues your community faces around connectivity but learn about what we can do to help. If you have any further questions, please reach out to Executive Director, Connected Communities, Jeanne Holliss at Jeanne.Holliss@gov.bc.ca or 250-516-3848.

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with the Minister. I look forward to hearing about the progress your community continues to make in the coming year.

Sincerely,



Shauna Brouwer
Deputy Minister

pc: Susan Stanford, Assistant Deputy Minister
Connectivity Division

Connected Communities
ConnectedCommunitiesBC@gov.bc.ca