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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Citizens' Services

### **Faster internet for Denman and Hornby islands**

VICTORIA – Faster, more reliable internet is coming to people on Denman and Hornby islands as the Connecting British Columbia program continues its work to bring world-class connectivity to rural communities on the coast.

“We are moving toward a future where people in communities up and down the coast have the same level of internet services being offered in urban centres like Vancouver and Victoria,” said Lisa Beare, Minister of Citizens’ Services. “Upgrading the networks on Hornby and Denman will boost the performance of internet access this year and prepare the islands to be connected to the high-performance Connected Coast network.”

People on Denman and Hornby islands will soon be able to enjoy improved internet performance thanks to two projects supported by the Connecting British Columbia program. CityWest will receive up to \$3.26 million from the program to upgrade services on Denman Island and up to \$2.38 million for its work on Hornby Island, helping to ensure people in these communities have the internet access they need well into the future.

“While in-person connections are at the heart of our home support, outreach and family support services, we rely on the internet to make this work possible,” said Lori Nawrot, executive director, Hornby and Denman Community Health Care Society. “Our staff often work in isolation in empty or marginal pockets of internet and cellular reception. Improved service will make our jobs safer and expand our options for online training and certification, crucial for the recruitment of new staff.”

More than 1,350 households will begin to see improvements through these projects, with reliable, high-speed internet coming with the Connected Coast project.

Connected Coast is a \$45.4-million investment in coastal connectivity jointly funded by federal and B.C. governments. CityWest has partnered with the Strathcona Regional District to construct a subsea fibre-optic network with access points along B.C.’s coastline between Vancouver and Prince Rupert, to Haida Gwaii and around Vancouver Island. Construction is expected to begin this summer and will include stops on the Gulf Islands.

“We’re absolutely thrilled about today’s announcement, which is the result of huge support at the provincial and community levels, as well as hard work from our entire team at CityWest,” said Stefan Woloszyn, CEO, CityWest. “We’re looking forward to working with and serving the communities on Denman and Hornby islands, ensuring they get great Internet services and a superior customer experience.”

People on Denman and Hornby islands will be able to enjoy a direct fibre connection to their homes when the Connected Coast network is completed and their community is connected to

a proposed landing site.

“Better bandwidth opens possibilities for people including economic and educational opportunities, remote work, the ability to stay connected with family and friends, and so much more. The library has a special role to play, helping people build the digital skills needed to take advantage of these new opportunities,” says Anne O’Shea, deputy executive director and chief operating officer, Vancouver Island Regional Library. “Improved internet will enhance our ability to deliver these services to Hornby Island and the remote communities in our 39-branch co-operative library system.”

Investments in high-speed internet access for coastal communities is part of Stronger BC: BC’s Economic Recovery Plan.

The Province expanded the Connecting British Columbia program in September 2020 with a \$90-million grant to encourage investment in broadband and cellular infrastructure that benefits people in rural and Indigenous communities throughout B.C.

Northern Development Initiative Trust has been the fund administrator for the Connecting British Columbia program since its inception in 2015. Northern Development is a regionally operated economic development funding corporation for central and northern British Columbia and operates independently from government.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Josie Osborne, MLA for Mid Island-Pacific Rim –**

“Travelling throughout my riding, one of the most consistent priorities I hear from people is the critical importance of fast and reliable internet access. The Connecting British Columbia program is doing a remarkable job encouraging service providers to make investments in communities like Denman Island and Hornby Island. A bright future – one where people in coastal communities have the internet access they need – is quickly coming into view, thanks to co-operation between all orders of government and with internet service providers.”

##### **Joel McKay, CEO, Northern Development Initiative Trust –**

“We are seeing an incredible push to connect coastal areas with the fastest internet access technology available today. As these investments in coastal communities proceed people in places like Hornby and Denman islands will have new opportunities to do business and learn online, stay connected with loved ones and enjoy the convenience of accessing services remotely. One step at a time, these projects are helping to bring new levels of prosperity to rural and Indigenous communities along the coast.”

#### **Learn More:**

StrongerBC: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>

Connecting British Columbia Program:

<https://www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca/fundingprograms/partner-programs/connecting-british-columbia>

Connectivity in B.C.: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/connectivity-in-bc>

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