

The Connected Coast project is the placement of sub-sea fibre optic cable from north of Prince Rupert to Haida Gwaii and south along the BC Coast to Vancouver and around Vancouver Island. The Connected Coast project is funded from the Government of Canada's Connect to Innovate program, Indigenous Services Canada, and the Province of BC.

In January of 2021 the Village of Port Alice was contacted by the Strathcona Regional District and CityWest who are managing the Connected Coast project in our area. At that time the Port Alice Council agreed to write a letter of support for the project and to facilitate a landing site for the sub-sea cable.

In 2022 the Village started negotiations with Baylink Networks who is the contractor hired by the Connected Coast Project to construct the landing sites. An agreement was reached and an underground vault and a communications cabinet with network equipment were installed on one of the Village's properties on Marine Drive. It is expected that the sub-sea cable will be connected in 2024.

This project will bring fibre optic cable to the landing sight, but it does not provide "last-mile connectivity" to our homes and businesses. The Village of Port Alice Mayor and CAO met with Telus at the UBCM conference in 2022 and asked about them or Mascon providing last-mile connections but there were no plans to do so at that time.

In January of 2023 the Council met with CityWest and received more information about the Connected Coast project. CityWest offered to partner with the Village to install the last-mile connections and offered to prepare an estimate of the cost. They got back to the Village with a proposal of \$2,500,000. There are grants from various organizations for last-mile connections, but they are only for "underserved" communities and we are considered to be a "served" community as Mascon offers speeds of 60 up and 10 down. Without a grant the Village cannot afford the cost of the proposal, the increase to taxes for each homeowner would be \$450 per year for ten years.

Since the January meeting this year Village staff have been in touch with both our MP Rachel Blaney's office, and our MLA Michelle Babchuk's office hoping they could help with access to funding. In July of 2023 Village staff met with Ministry of Citizens Services, Connectivity Division and we were advised once the sub-sea cable is in place Mascon / Telus would be able to connect to it and we would see some improvement to our internet without having fibre installed to every household.

This Fall, Village staff have met several times with Telus / Mascon and we have continued to advocate for improved internet services.

If you have any questions regarding the Connected Coast Project please email me at [cao@portalice.ca](mailto:cao@portalice.ca) or call me at 250-284-3391.

*Bonnie Danyk, CAO / CFO*