



November 14, 2019

Ref: 112178

John McNabb  
President, North Island 9-1-1 Corporation  
600 Comox Road  
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 3P6

Dear Mr. McNabb:

Thank you for your correspondence dated September 16, 2019, addressed to the Honourable Mike Farnworth expressing your concerns surrounding public safety and lack of cellular service throughout the North Island Region. Your letter has been referred to the Ministry of Citizen's Services and I am pleased to respond in my role as Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for initiatives to advance connectivity in B.C.

The Government of British Columbia recognizes the importance of cellular connectivity along provincial highways and in rural communities, especially for public safety. We know that cell service along highways ensures there is immediate access to emergency services when they are needed most.

In Canada, telecommunications companies are regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Recently, in a CRTC decision, it was acknowledged that all Canadians should have access to voice services and internet access services on both fixed and cellular wireless networks. At a national level, the solution is being studied by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) including the cost of cellular services expansion.

In BC, there are an estimated 6,100 kilometers of primary and secondary highways in rural areas that do not have cellular services. The cost to address this lack of coverage is substantive and will require all levels of government to work together on a viable solution.

The Province is working closely with telecommunications companies and with the Government of Canada to lay the groundwork – through broadband infrastructure – to help internet service providers connect more B.C. communities to cellular coverage. We are looking forward to the next intake of the \$750-million Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) Broadband Fund in the upcoming months and the release of the details about how it will support the expansion of cellular along rural highways.

In addition to the Province working with the federal government through the CRTC broadband fund, we are also looking at other solutions along highway segments where cellular may not be feasible, such as highway call boxes.

As you might be aware, Rogers has built a tower in the Sprout Lake area which extends new cellular coverage along a portion of Highway 4 and the area surrounding Sprout Lake and Port Alberni. We would encourage you to continue to voice the need for expanded cellular coverage by contacting the providers directly. For Rogers, please contact Glenn Alsaker at [Glenn.Alsaker@rci.rogers.com](mailto:Glenn.Alsaker@rci.rogers.com), for Shaw, contact Kiersten Enemark at [Kiersten.Enemark@sjrb.ca](mailto:Kiersten.Enemark@sjrb.ca), and for TELUS, contact Aurora Sekela at [Aurora.Sekela@telus.ca](mailto:Aurora.Sekela@telus.ca).

Thank you again for writing to express your concerns. If you have any questions regarding connectivity programs, please contact Howard Randell at 250 415-6867, or by email at [NetworkBC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:NetworkBC@gov.bc.ca).

Sincerely,



Susan Stanford  
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: CRTC  
Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District  
Comox Valley Regional District  
Qathet Regional District  
Regional District of Nanaimo  
Regional District of Mount Waddington  
Strathcona Regional District  
Claire Trevena, MLA, North Island  
Ronna-Rae Leonard, MLA, Courtenay-Comox  
Scott Fraser, MLA, Mid-Island Pacific Rim  
Rachel Blaney, MP, North Island-Powell River  
Gord Johns, MP, Courtenay-Alberni  
Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Honourable Selena Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Citizens' Services  
Network BC, Ministry of Citizens' Services