

17 September 2020

Transmitted by email: [pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister

RE: **Rural Connectivity**

On behalf of the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, I am writing to support the need for increased rural connectivity, and to ask that you prioritize this project in your future discussions with your cabinet colleagues and in future budgets.

Already an issue in rural Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced how important fast, reliable connection to the internet is in the daily lives of Canadians, for many reasons, including social interaction, telecommuting, to access virtual health care services and enable remote learning. While we've made progress in this over the last few years, rural and remote Canadians have fallen behind.

We encourage the Government of Canada to show leadership in this important project and that you promote programs to address shortcomings across Canada. We need to prioritize policies that encourage private sector investment in connectivity for rural and remote communities and, certainly, the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen is a prime example. Improved broadband connectivity for our citizens and communities would help so much to make them sustainable.

The federal government could encourage rural network investment and deployment by:

- Expediting the 3500 MHz and 3800 MHz spectrum auctions so that this spectrum can be put to use for all Canadians, sooner;
- Imposing meaningful deployment conditions across accelerated timelines to all spectrum holders.
- Ending the use of spectrum set asides, particularly for rural areas, as set-aside eligible telecoms companies do not have a track record of deploying in rural Canada, and
- Continuing to invest in rural connectivity programs by launching the Universal Broadband Fund, supporting the CRTC Broadband Fund, and identifying opportunities to match or coordinate funding programs with the provinces.

As time passes Canada can no longer afford delays to roll out wireless connectivity. A start would be the inclusion of commitments in new ministerial mandate letters, reflecting your government's commitment to encourage private sector investment in connectivity for the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen and all of rural Canada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karla Kozakevich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Karla Kozakevich, Chair

CC: The Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance [Chrystia.Freeland@canada.ca](mailto:Chrystia.Freeland@canada.ca)

CC: The Hon. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry [ISI.minister-ministre.ISI@canada.ca](mailto:ISI.minister-ministre.ISI@canada.ca)