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Castlegar, BC

Communities Partner on Smart Kootenay Initiative – Help to Shape Our Collaborative Efforts

Smart cities use data and technology to create efficiencies, improve sustainability, create economic development, and enhance quality of life factors for people living and working in the city. Inspired by the Government of Canada's *Smart Cities Challenge* the Cities of Rossland, Trail, Castlegar and Nelson and surrounding regional district areas have partnered with economic development practitioners and technology entrepreneurs to explore ways our communities can use technology to address some of our biggest challenges. Members of the group have gathered feedback from their respective communities on challenges where data & technology can be utilized to overcome barriers in our rural area. **We need your help now to further shape the proposal:** https://my.thoughtexchange.com/#974574534

"*This all began as a conversation with our mayor in Rossland*", says Darin Recchi of Thoughtexchange – a Rossland-based software company. "*Thinking about how we could use technology to address our biggest challenges in the community inspired us to reach out to the other municipalities and to Selkirk College. We quickly realized the similarities between our municipalities and the benefits of tackling this challenge as a group*."

A session facilitated by Selkirk College's Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) was held in March 2018 to identify priority challenge areas and to envision possible technology solutions. The session built on feedback obtained from close to 100 residents. The overarching themes that emerged were related to transportation and connecting ourselves to each other and the world.

"*We have a great opportunity in front of us*," says Andrea Wilkey of Community Futures, "*to work together to access federal resources to support our region to use technology to improve our quality of life whether that be to improve transportation, create jobs or improve supports/services to residents. The Smart Cities Challenge funding could help us bring those opportunities to fruition.*"

"*The Smart Kootenay Initiative is a great example of what our region can do when we collectively work together. There are so many bright minds in our respective communities, and I am excited that this process will highlight what we have already achieved and how we can continue to be at the leading edge of technology in the Kootenays,*" says Mayor of Castlegar, Lawrence D. Chernoff.

"*We are very excited to be part of this partnership and see incredible value in a regional approach to creating "smart" strategies to strengthen our economy now and in the years to come,*" remarks Terry Van Horn, Executive Director for the Trail and area Economic Development Office, Lower Columbia Initiatives Corporation.

Smart Kootenay partners are now working with the RDI to develop a proposal to be submitted to the Government of Canada in time for the Smart Cities Challenge application April 24 deadline. To learn more about the Smart Cities Challenge visit: http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/plan/cities-villes-eng.html and to learn about the Smart Kootenays initiative please visit: smartkootenays.cbrdi.ca.

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The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College, is a regional research centre with a mandate to support informed decision-making by Columbia Basin-Boundary communities through the provision of information, applied research and related outreach and extension support.