

**From:** Dr. Michel Guité <mguite@vermontel.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 8, 2020 12:03 PM

**To:** Faith Brown <FBrown@leg.state.vt.us>; Ann Cummings <ACUMMINGS@leg.state.vt.us>; Mark MacDonald <MMacDonald@leg.state.vt.us>; Tierney, June <June.Tierney@vermont.gov>; Clay Purvis <Clay.Purvis@vermont.gov>; Maria Royle <MROYLE@leg.state.vt.us>; Quinn, John <John.Quinn@vermont.gov>; Gibbs, Jason <Jason.Gibbs@vermont.gov>; Tim Briglin <TBriglin@leg.state.vt.us>

**Cc:** Gordon Mathews <gmathews@vermontel.com>; Arianna M. Robinson <arianna@vermontel.com>

**Subject:** [External] FCC Emergency Spectrum

[External]

Dear Faith,

Would you please distribute one small clarification, and a comment and attachment, to members of our Senate Finance Committee?

**CLARIFICATION:** A small error was made during the informative testimony of Clay Purvis yesterday, in reply to a committee member's question. The radio frequencies VTel Wireless used in Rutland to assist students without Internet were not FCC Emergency Spectrum loaned to VTel by the FCC. We own these FCC radio frequencies. This spectrum, generally called 'BRS', is available everywhere in America, totals 73.5 MHz which is a huge amount, and is the lowest frequency part of what many people colloquially but not 100% accurately now call "5G spectrum". We bought this spectrum for all of Vermont in public auctions against Sprint, Sovernet, and others, a decade ago for about \$4.5 million. As far as I know Vermont is the only state in America where all of these statewide frequencies are owned by a single independent wireless rural telephone company.

**COMMENT:** There is a great opportunity for Vermont today, to support VTel Wireless' build of this unusual resource, by using a part of the potential \$1.25 billion that Maria Royle identified yesterday as available to Vermont to respond to COVID-19, to be spent before year-end. The Ericsson radios are available today. We own the frequencies today. Our towers and backhaul are ready today. We are seeking RUS funds to install these radios on 102 of our most rural towers, with our RUS application going in next Tuesday, but this will likely take months, with prospects of success not predictable. Vermont's COVID-19 resources to be allocated to broadband, with 1,000 miles of fiber and 500 x 90' phone poles installed by

Vermont community groups, plus adding BRS radios to as many VTel towers as possible, could contribute to statewide broadband in a very material way.

Regarding schools, we have reached out to all school boards in Vermont, offering free internet to any kids we can serve with wireless. Following is an email I sent to 38 school boards Monday, working cooperatively with always-helpful John Quinn. The limitation is that the 4G wireless network we built during 2011-2018 was designed to deliver 1 -10 Mbps to rural homes. Next generation radios, as we deployed in Rutland, seek to deliver 50-500 Mbps. When we at VTel study lists of Vermont kids needing internet today because of our COVID-10 crisis, with the question “which of these addresses can we serve with a minimum of 20 Mbps of speed today using our 4G LTE ” the answer, I am very sorry to report, is very few. Not zero, but with several school lists of 25 or more rural homes in need, we are finding only one or two homes per list. Nonetheless we are not delaying, and are Fed Exing free routers with free Internet to some of these today.

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Good afternoon,

To try to assist some of the many wonderful Vermont educators collaborating to help students sent home because of COVID-19, VTel today brought in employee volunteers to send out 50 wireless antennae/routers to families who do not have Internet, via Federal Express. Our offer is for free VTel Wireless internet during the duration of this pandemic, or through year-end 2020, whichever comes first, with 100 Gigabytes of data per month at “full speed” and slowed down thereafter, with free wireless antennae/routers we are giving away and do not ask to be returned. For various good reasons, some of the school lists of needy families that we were hoping to review today are not quite ready, but we are eager to meet our quota of 50 Federal Express packages.

The attached article about Rutland’s wonderfully innovative schools, from Bloomberg News <https://www.bloomberg.com/press-releases/2020-03-31/vermont-telephone-company-and-ericsson-mobilize-quickly-to-provide-rutland-city-public-schools-with-free-internet>, shows one COVID-19 related school project underway. We cannot replicate this elsewhere because our new Ericsson state-of-the-art wireless radios enabling 5G signals in Rutland are not widely available throughout the state. But we have 4G LTE radio

signals that are not as fast, and do not go as far, but are being broadcast from our 153 towers. Any step forward we can offer to help during this COVID-19 emergency might be better than no step.

Do you have students or teachers or administrators, known to you or your school, who are at home now with no Internet because of financial limitations, or because they believe they do not have Internet at their location? If you send us one address, ten addresses, or 50 addresses today we will do a rapid analysis to determine what speed each location would experience from our 4G LTE wireless towers. We do not need to know names of any students. Only addresses, or less ideal, but perhaps ok, is a range of street addresses such as “15 to 17 Maple Avenue”. In this first shipment, we are offering this free service only to homes where the VTel Wireless 4G LTE signal received would be very strong, in the range of 20 Mbps down, using one of our portable, easy to use, indoor antennae, with our AWS radio signal. In many parts of Vermont perhaps only 20% of the target homes would qualify. With some lists we will likely say “we can’t serve any of the homes.” In some we hope to say “we can do them all”. We can Fed Ex the indoor antennae/routers to schools to re-distribute to specific addresses, or we can Fed Ex directly to the addresses.

I hope to hear from you today or tomorrow, but once we use up our first 50 or 70 in-home antennae, it will likely take some weeks to replenish these. To move this along as rapidly as possible, if you are able to reply today or tomorrow, please reply to both me and also to Kristen Brusco of VTel whose address appears above,

Stay well,

**Dr. Michel Guité**

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