



REPORT

To: Chair and Directors

Report Number: CS-BRD-404

From: Community Services

Date: May 1, 2025

Subject: Bearhole Mountain Radio Repeater Communication Site – Crown Land Tenure

RECOMMENDATION #1: [Corporate Weighted]

That the Regional Board authorize the License of Occupation for the Bearhole Mountain Radio Repeater Site, which includes the Notice of Final Review for the purpose of maintaining the current radio repeater site; and further that the Chair of the Regional Board and Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to sign both the License of Occupation and the Notice of Final Review on behalf of the Peace River Regional District.

RECOMMENDATION #2: [Corporate Unweighted]

That the Regional Board authorize that a tower use agreement be drafted between the Regional District and Conuma Resources, allowing for the continued use of the radio tower located at Bearhole Mountain as per the terms of the PRRD's License of Occupation, for the purpose of completing maintenance of the tower and land remediation if the tower is decommissioned.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

A License of Occupation (LoO) is a form of Crown Land tenure that grants temporary permission to use or occupy Crown Land for specific purposes, such as a communication site. These agreements are commonly structured to last as long as 30 years.

Recommendation #1:

The Bearhole Mountain Radio Repeater provides a transmission point between 911 Dispatch and first responders in the area. The Peace River Regional District owns the repeater equipment and the small equipment building in which the equipment is installed.

The existing Bearhole Mountain Radio Repeater communication site is located on Crown Land without a License of Occupation, which was discovered when Petron Communications LTD. received a notice of trespass at the site. An application for the consideration of receiving a LoO for the site was created, as the critical infrastructure is well established at the location of the existing tower and is currently providing fire dispatch for the local fire department, Tumbler Ridge Fire & Rescue. This site is identified by PlanetWorks as part of the Emergency Radio Communications Master Plan.

On October 17, 2021, the Regional Board passed the following resolution:

MOVED, SECONDED, and CARRIED

That the Regional Board authorize the replacement of radio tower infrastructure at twelve (12) repeater sites throughout the Peace River Regional District, which provides critical emergency radio communications services for the 11 fire departments in the Regional District at a cost of \$2,100,000, with \$300,000 allocated from capital reserve and \$191,736 requisitioned from Function 305-911 Emergency Telephone System, as per the approved 2021 financial plan.

A LoO agreement has been prepared, allowing for the continued use of the communication site for the Radio Repeater for a term of 30 years, with licensing costs of \$1,017(excluding tax) per year. This will allow the PRRD to continue to have their existing infrastructure located at the site that houses the repeater equipment and utilizes Conuma Resources' radio tower.

If a new location needs to be identified, there are significant costs associated with surveying new sites, establishing access to the site, and building the infrastructure, including pilings and potential slabs for a new tower and shack. The estimated cost to develop a new site is \$300,000-\$500,000. This would be on top of the requirement to remediate the existing site that the PRRD Repeater shack is currently located at, which could be over \$100,000, due to the remoteness of the current site.

Recommendation #2:

Due to the lack of a LoO for the Radio Repeater communication site, staff have been unable to work towards an agreement with Conuma Resources for tower use. Once the LoO is signed by the Peace River Regional District, staff will work with Conuma Resources to establish an agreement that holds them to the terms of the License of Occupation. Such an agreement will include specified regular maintenance on the tower, and if there are considerations to decommission the tower, that they are responsible for remediation of the land that the tower is sitting on.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Regional Board provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

- ☒ Emergency Management

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

There is an annual fee of \$1,017 (excluding tax) for each term of the 30-year License of Occupation agreement.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

Once the Province grants a License of Occupation, staff must work with Conuma Resources to develop an agreement for their existing telecommunications infrastructure on the site.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

If the existing site isn't issued a License of Occupation, staff will need to start looking at other options in the area to move the critical repeater infrastructure.