

TOWN OF SMITHERS

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May 23, 2006

FILE: 7140-20

Mr. Dennis Lund
Spectrum Management Officer
Industry Canada
Northern BC/Yukon District
#203 – 280 Victoria Street
Prince George, B.C. V2L 4X3

Dear Mr. Lund:

RE: Multi-Use Radios and Effects to the Smithers Fire Department

At its Regular Meeting held May 9, 2006, Council received the attached report presented by our Fire Chief, Keith Stecko, which fully explains the potential impacts to the Town of Smithers should the proposed spectrum changes take effect due to the introduction of Multi-Use Radios.

Council supports the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and strongly appeals that Industry Canada reconsiders the proposed changes to the spectrum in bands below 1.7 Ghz for the safety of our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important matter.

Yours truly,

James A. Davidson
Mayor

JAD/jm

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TOWN OF SMITHERS

REPORT TO COUNCIL

DATE: May 1, 2006

REPORT: Fire06-02

FROM: Keith Stecko, Fire Chief

FILE: 7140-20

SUBJECT: Proposals and changes to the Spectrum in Certain Bands Below 1.7 GHz

RECOMMENDATION: That Council write a letter of opposition to the changes to the spectrum in certain bands below 1.7GHz.

DISCUSSION:

The February 2004 Throne Speech stated "there is no role more fundamental for government than the protection of its citizens." That statement of philosophy coincides perfectly with the mandate of Fire Departments across Canada: to protect the lives and property of Canadians within their municipal jurisdictions either as permanent residents or as visitors.

It is the position of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) that permitting removal of the availability of any part of the 150 MHz Band from the Fire Services will serve the best interests of neither the citizens of Canada nor of both the Fire Services and the federal Government which jointly share the responsibility to protect those citizens.

The bandwidth from 151.820 MHz to 154.600 MHz is used in Canada almost exclusively by the Fire Services. The vast majority of the almost 3,500 Fire Departments situated in every part of Canada are using this bandwidth. There are several reasons why this is the case. They include:

- The 150 MHz bandwidth is capable of penetrating through building walls and through glass. As such, it is ideal for communicating with firefighters when they have entered burning structures to save lives.
- The 150 MHz bandwidth has been set aside for emergency communications within defined and quite small geographical areas.

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FRANCIS GEORGE, DC

May 9/06

- It was Industry Canada that reduced the spread available to the Fire Services from 24 kHz to 12 kHz within the 150 MHz bandwidth and encouraged the Fire Services to migrate to that location.
- The communications equipment generally available in Canada to the Fire Services is most commonly calibrated in the 150 MHz bandwidth making that a powerful inducement to the acquisition of such equipment.

To propose that the five 150 MHz bandwidths be opened up to multi-use radio service (MURS) will create significant hardship to the Fire Services. It is disappointing to read that a rationalization for the Proposal is that "Canadians are large consumers of electronic devices and radio technologies and want similar radio products as those available in the U.S. market." It is astonishing to CAFC that consumer interests of this nature would take precedence over the needs of emergency first responders. This reaction becomes particularly acute when it is remembered that it was Industry Canada that led the Fire Services to embrace the reduced 150 MHz band width just five years ago.

Industry Canada has proposed a transition plan that it deems "reasonable" when it comes to permitting the sale and distribution of MURS devices in what is now regarded as the Fire Services bandwidth. CAFC does not agree with the reasonableness of this approach for the following reasons:

- During the past three years, virtually all fire trucks in Canada have had their radios replaced to prepare for the 12 kHz spread within the 150 MHz bandwidth. The costs of these replacements were borne by municipal governments and, by extension, the people of Canada.
- The five-year proposed transition period is unreasonably harsh. When Fire Chiefs stood before their municipal councils over the past three years to argue in favour of re-equipping their radios, they assured these councils that the new radios would be used for many years to come. Now Industry Canada wishes to render them obsolete within five years of the intended spectrum policy being finalized. This is despite the fact that several years from now these radios would still have a useful life of many years.
- The statement that Industry Canada "will seek to accommodate affected licensees that wish to move in other frequency bands" is sufficiently vague as to cause alarm within the Fire Services. There is no assurance that affected licensees would be accommodated, simply an undertaking to seek to accommodate them. There is no statement as to which bandwidth would be used for the wholesale transference of the communications needs of thousands of Canadian Fire Departments.

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs recommends strongly that Industry Canada abandon its moves to attempt to force Canadian Fire Departments to abandon their 150 MHz bandwidths. This submission has described the negative impacts that this attempt will have. The only benefit that the proposal to change the spectrum in certain bands below 1.7 GHz is to provide Canadian consumers with radio products similar to those available in the U.S. market. CAFC does not regard this as an important benefit. Finally, the transition measures that have been proposed by Industry Canada are not adequate.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS:

None

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

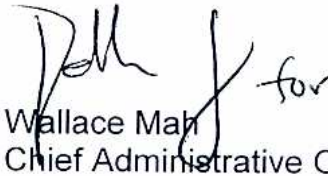
None

Respectfully submitted by:

Approved for submission by:



Keith Stecko,
Fire Chief



Wallace Mah
Chief Administrative Officer

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