



# INDIGENOUS PRIORITY WINDOW (IPW)

*From Spectrum to Service: Making the most of ISED's Indigenous Priority Window*

Oct 7, 2026



Innovation, Science and  
Economic Development Canada

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Développement économique Canada



# AGENDA

- Introduction
- Indigenous Priority Window
- Key dates
- Available Spectrum & Fees
- Other available bands
- Opportunities
- Deployment Scenarios & What to Consider
- Potential funding streams
- Q & A



# ABOUT US



**Filomeno Pepe, P. Eng.**

Partner and Assistant Director – Wireless Communications  
YRH

Filomeno Pepe is a Professional Engineer with over 20 years experience in wireless engineering, having joined YRH in 2005. Mr. Pepe is involved in various radio frequency design projects in areas such as FM and television broadcasting, VHF / UHF mobile radios and public safety networks, cellular HSPA, LTE, 5G NR, WiFi, smart grids, FWA, private networks for industry 4.0, and point to multipoint and point to point microwave systems.

He is also responsible for managing large cellular infrastructure deployments across Canada. He is also responsible for developing and providing training for Pathloss 5 and 6 software, including coverage, point to point, and point-to-multipoint applications. Since 2019, Mr. Pepe has been a partner at YRH.

As associate director of the wireless group, he regularly acts as project director or project manager depending on the scope of the mandates. He is involved in the analyses, feasibility studies, design of microwave networks, wireless networks for cellular network operators, and private networks for critical infrastructure operators and for industry 4.0. including railroads, utilities, utilities, and mining.



**Mark Saunders**

Manager – Spectrum Policy Branch, ISED/ISDE

Mark Saunders has 15 years of experience in spectrum management at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, where he has contributed to the development of consultations and licensing frameworks across multiple spectrum bands.

He currently leads a team in the Spectrum Policy Branch dedicated to advancing spectrum access for Indigenous businesses, communities, and service providers through policy development and relationship building. A proud member of M'Chigeeng First Nation, Mark brings both professional expertise and personal commitment to his work. Outside of work, he enjoys family time and staying active.



# ABOUT YRH

- We are a neutral and independent engineering consulting firm since 1967, with over **85 employees across Canada**
- Planning, design and project management across Canada and in more than 50 countries
- Telcos, Indigenous, rural communities and critical infrastructure operators (24/7/365)
- We offer services such as RF simulation, drive-testing and cellular coverage mapping, business and technical assistance for telcos and cellular start-ups, project management
- 4 key sectors: **Wireless Communications, Tower and Structural Engineering, Fiber Optics and FTTH, and Telecom Infrastructures**

# YRH



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Telecommunications



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# INDIGENOUS PRIORITY WINDOW (IPW)

## Overview:

- January 2026, ISED published [Access Licensing Framework: Decision on the Indigenous Priority Window Policy](#).
- IPW provides Indigenous applicants priority access to unused spectrum in rural and remote areas, ahead of general licensing
- IPW will first apply to unused PCS and Cellular licences, on a first-come, first served basis, for a period of one year beginning in September 2026

## Key decisions:

- ISED will use an **applicant-based eligibility model** under which, Indigenous businesses, individuals and communities will be considered eligible to apply for an access spectrum licence via the IPW.
- The IPW **will be open for 12 consecutive months.**
- Also published [Spectrum Advisory Bulletin](#) outlining key dates and next steps.

# Key Dates



- **IPW opened:** 12 PM (noon) ET on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026
  - **Applications for all available licences have been received.**
- **Eligibility screening will end:** 12:00 PM (noon) ET on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2027
- **IPW will close:** By 12:00 PM (noon) ET on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2027

## Helpful links:

- Refer to the [Spectrum and the Indigenous Priority Window website](#) to read about the policy.
- Refer to the [Spectrum Advisory Bulletin](#) for key dates.

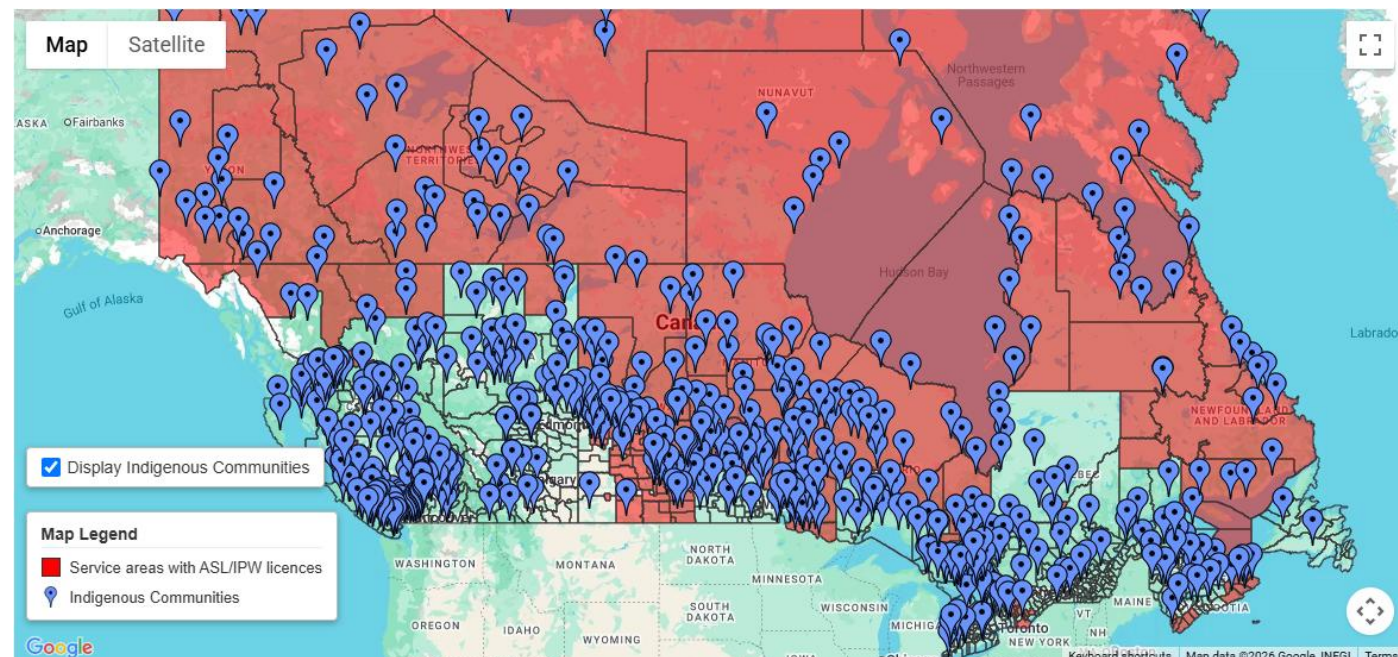
Please reach out to the ISED team to discuss alternative spectrum options

# AVAILABLE SPECTRUM

- Spectrum was available in 122 Tier 5 service areas with a total population of ~ 1.5 Million people.
- Licenced for the whole Tier 5 area
- To be deployed within 3 years of obtaining license

| Band               | Number of Tier 5 service areas | Population | Surface Area (M km <sup>2</sup> ) |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cellular (850 MHz) | 15                             | 52,244     | 3.4                               |
| PCS (1900 MHz)     | 122                            | 1,489,905  | 7.6                               |

- Deployment requirement: 1 station/10k population of licence area
- **Applications were submitted for all available licences → none are currently available**



<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/spectrum-management-telecommunications/en/spectrum-allocation/indigenous-priority-window-preliminary-spectrum-availability-map#news>

# SPECTRUM FEES

As per [ISED's decision on the CMS fees framework](#), ISED will implement a three-rate fee framework for in-scope licences. The three-rate structure will be implemented as follows:

1. Rate 1 (\$0.0005/MHz/population) for the first 900 million MHz-Pop of aggregated spectrum licence holdings
2. Rate 2 (\$0.0110/MHz/population) for aggregated spectrum licence holdings greater than 900 million MHz-Pop, up to and including 1800 million MHz-Pop
3. Rate 3 (\$0.0220/MHz/population) for any aggregated spectrum licence holdings greater than 1800 million MHz-Pop
4. ***For example, a typical 10 MHz channel in a remote Canadian territory with a population of 5000 in the Tier would cost  $(0.0005 \times 10 \times 5000) = \$25$  / year + Base rate of \$250 / year***

# Non-competitive local licensing (NCLL) framework



- **What is NCLL?**
  - New approach to licensing spectrum that enables smaller users to access 5G spectrum quickly and easily in very localized areas that best suit their business case.
    - Small customizable licence areas
    - Annual or Temporary Licences
    - Simple and strong deployment requirements
    - Simple licence application process
- **Where can I apply?**
  - 3900 MHz band available- >Access it here: [NCLL Portal](#)
- **Where can I find the NCLL Spectrum Browser?**
  - Explore the NCLL Spectrum Browser – a powerful planning tool for visualizing transmitters and receivers to assess interference.
  - You can find the NCLL Spectrum Browser [here](#).

**POLL QUESTION**

**Have you gone through the process of applying for spectrum through the IPW, or are you planning to?**

# OPPORTUNITIES

Ok so now I have the spectrum, but what can I do with it?

Last mile FWA service to reach remaining households without broadband FTTH service

FWA even without an existing FTTH network

Cellular Mobility operator service

Can potentially service private networks like mines, rail, utilities, etc.

IoT applications for: agriculture, forest fires, water management

Indoor DAS for large buildings: Schools, clinics, etc

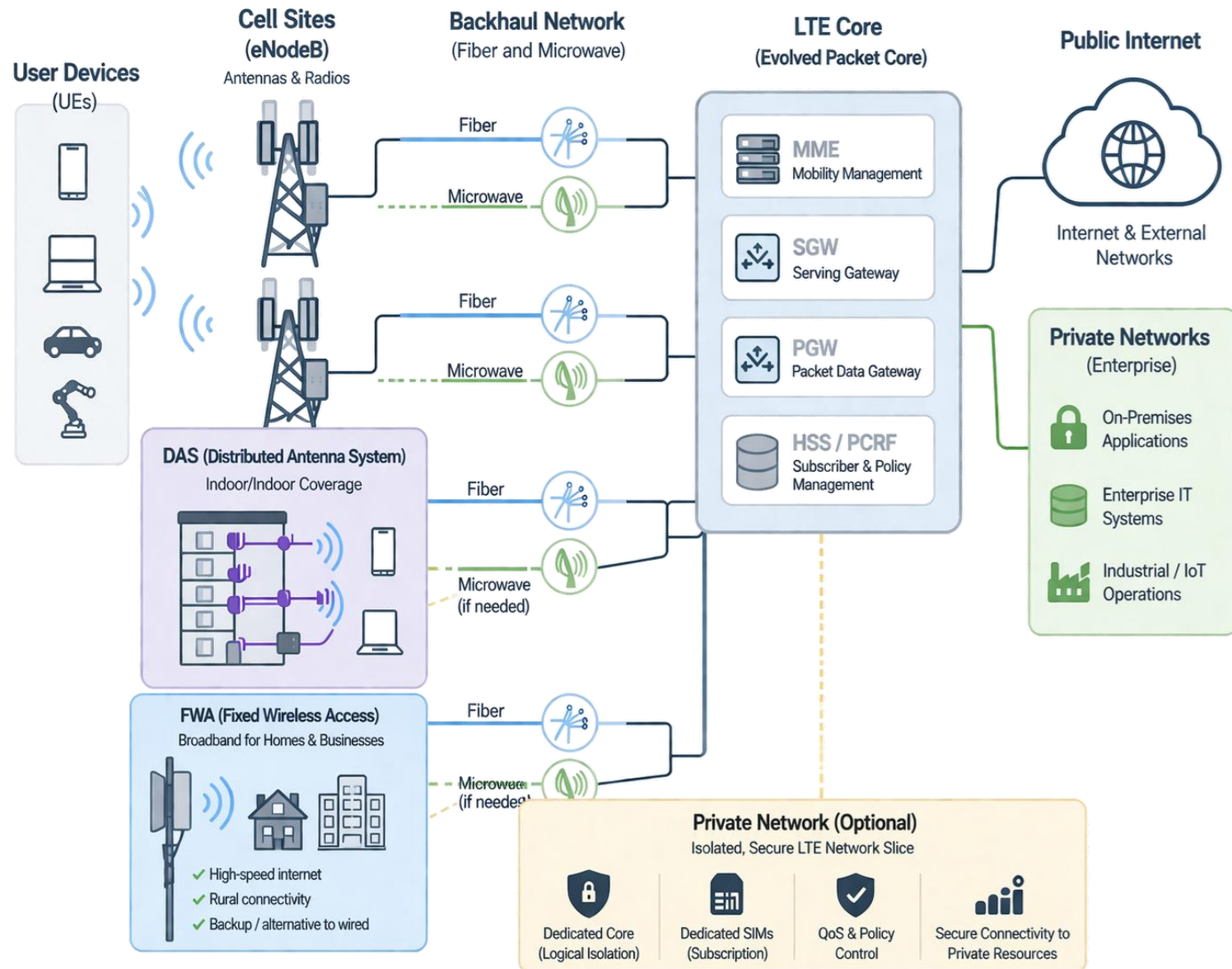
Service for public safety agencies: Police, Ambulance, Health, etc

*FWA: Fixed Wireless Access*

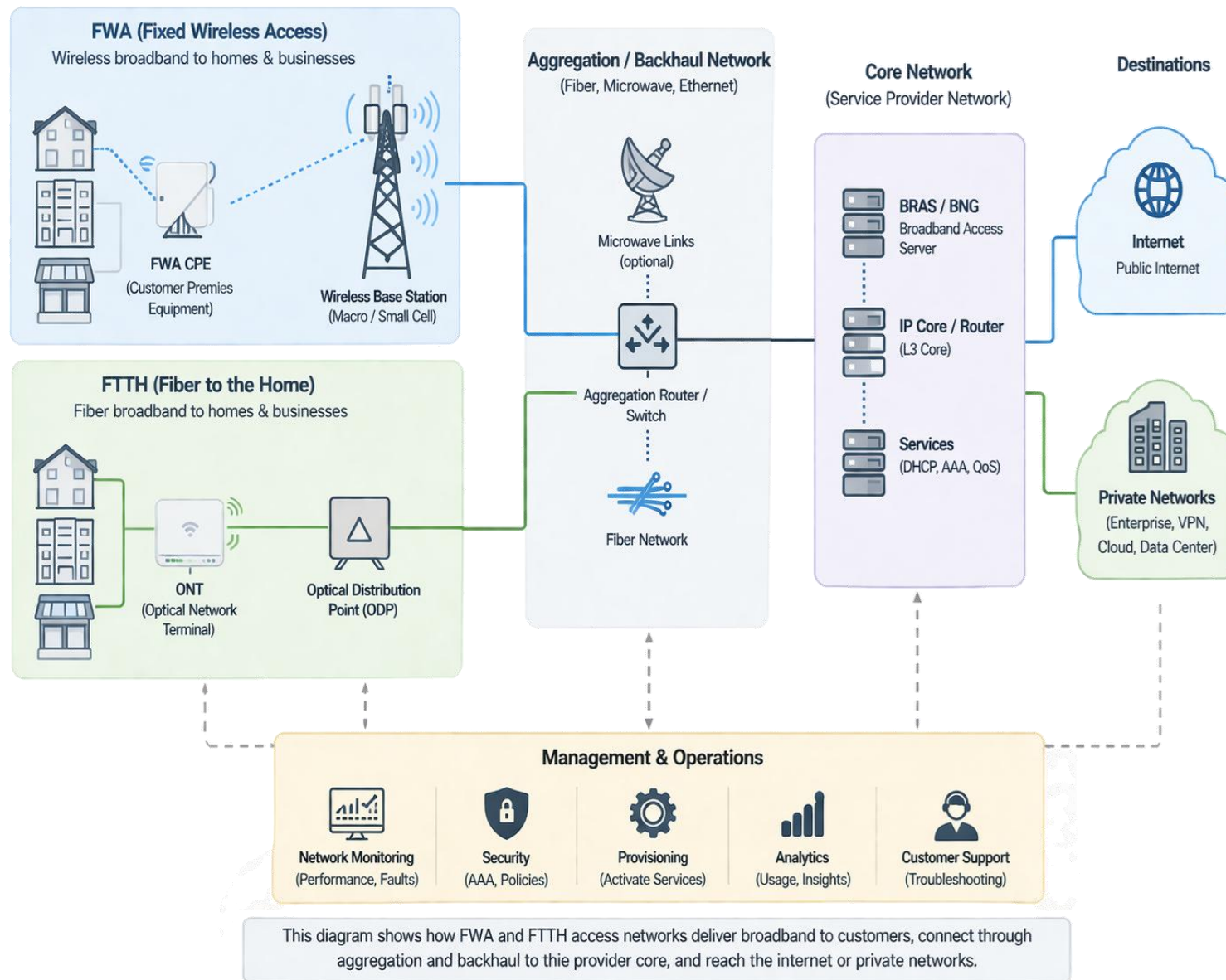
**Anchor clients and institutions → Economies of scale**



# TYPICAL COMPONENTS CELLULAR

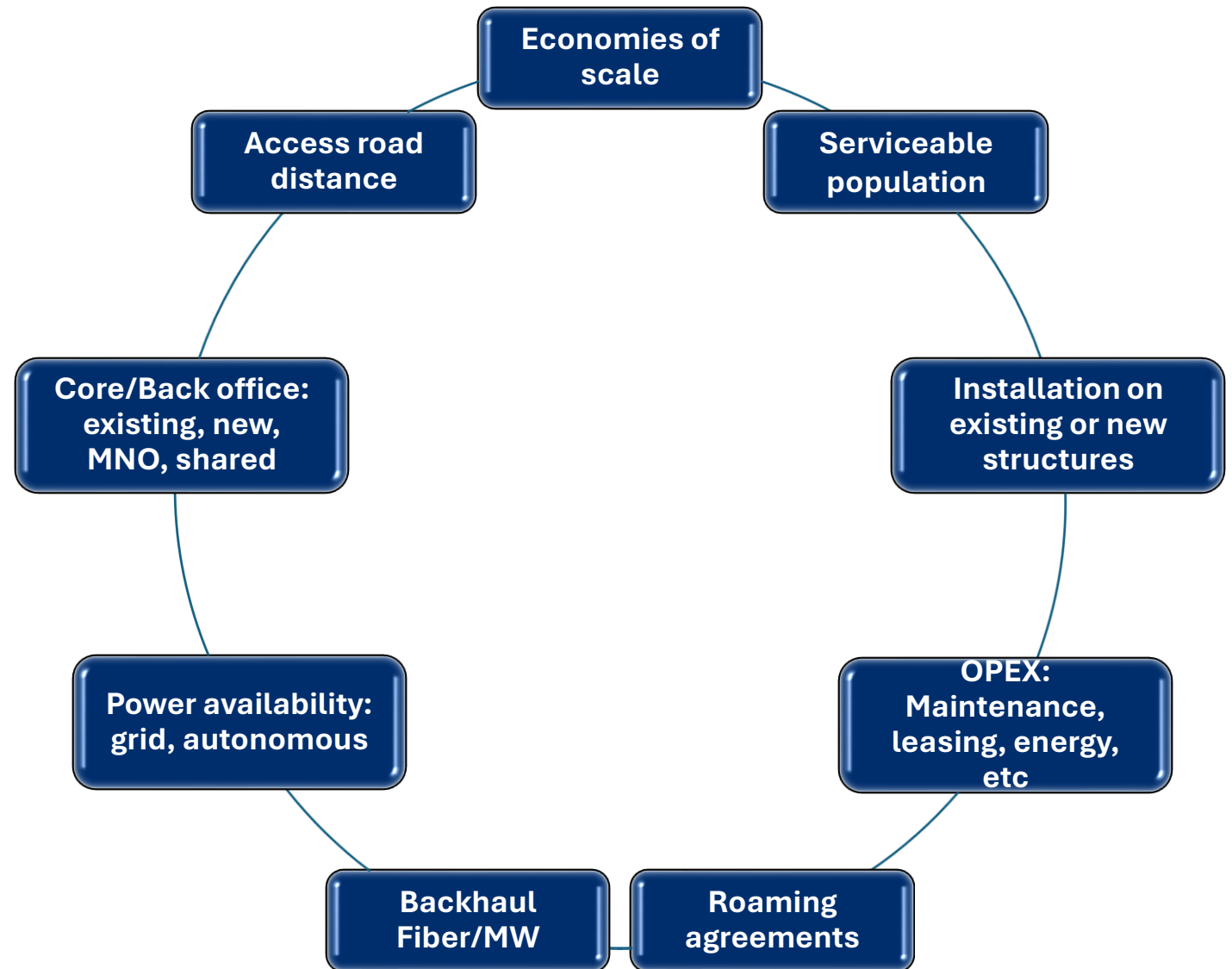


# TYPICAL COMPONENTS FWA



# WHAT TO CONSIDER

- Owning and operating a wireless network can be costly and complicated, especially in rural and remote areas. There are many things to consider.
- The business case is difficult, a reason why there are no deployments thus far by spectrum holders.
- Joining different communities and stakeholders is an imperative.

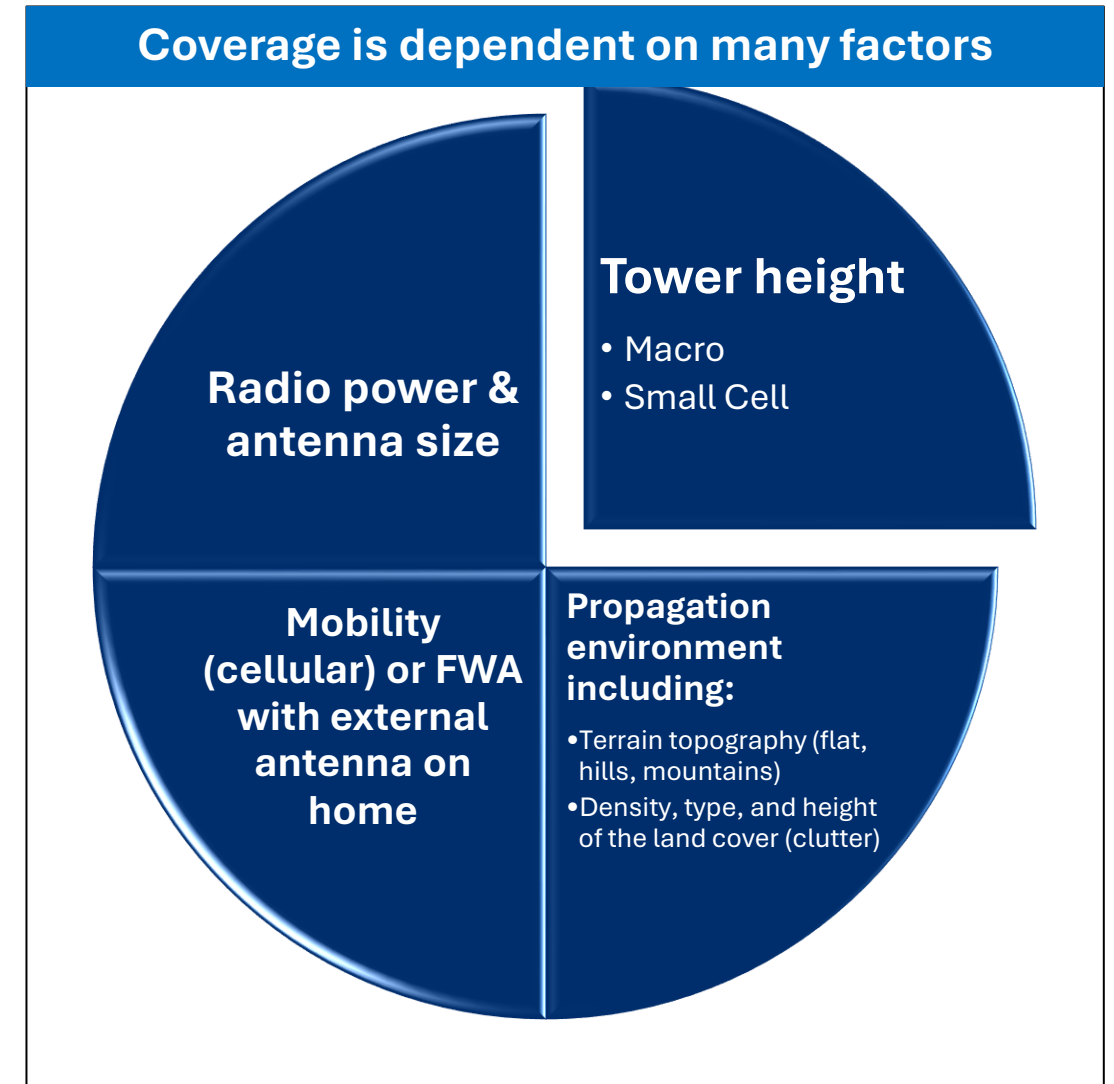


# DEPLOYMENT SCENARIOS & WHAT TO CONSIDER

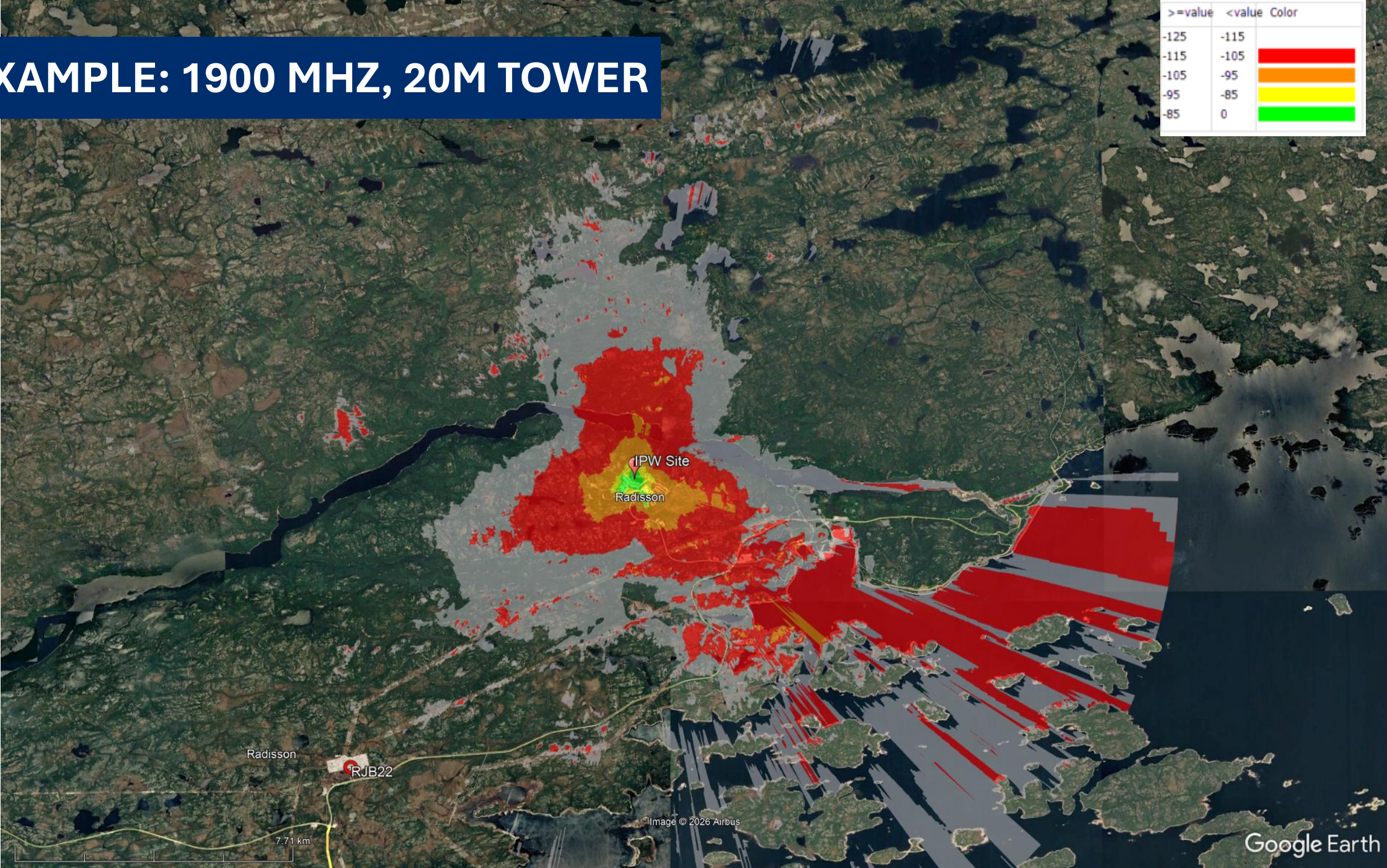
- Typical coverage area of 1900 MHz and 850 MHz:

| Frequency Band | Typical minimum radius (km) | Typical maximum radius (km) |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1900 MHz       | 2                           | 7                           |
| 850 MHz        | 8                           | 20                          |

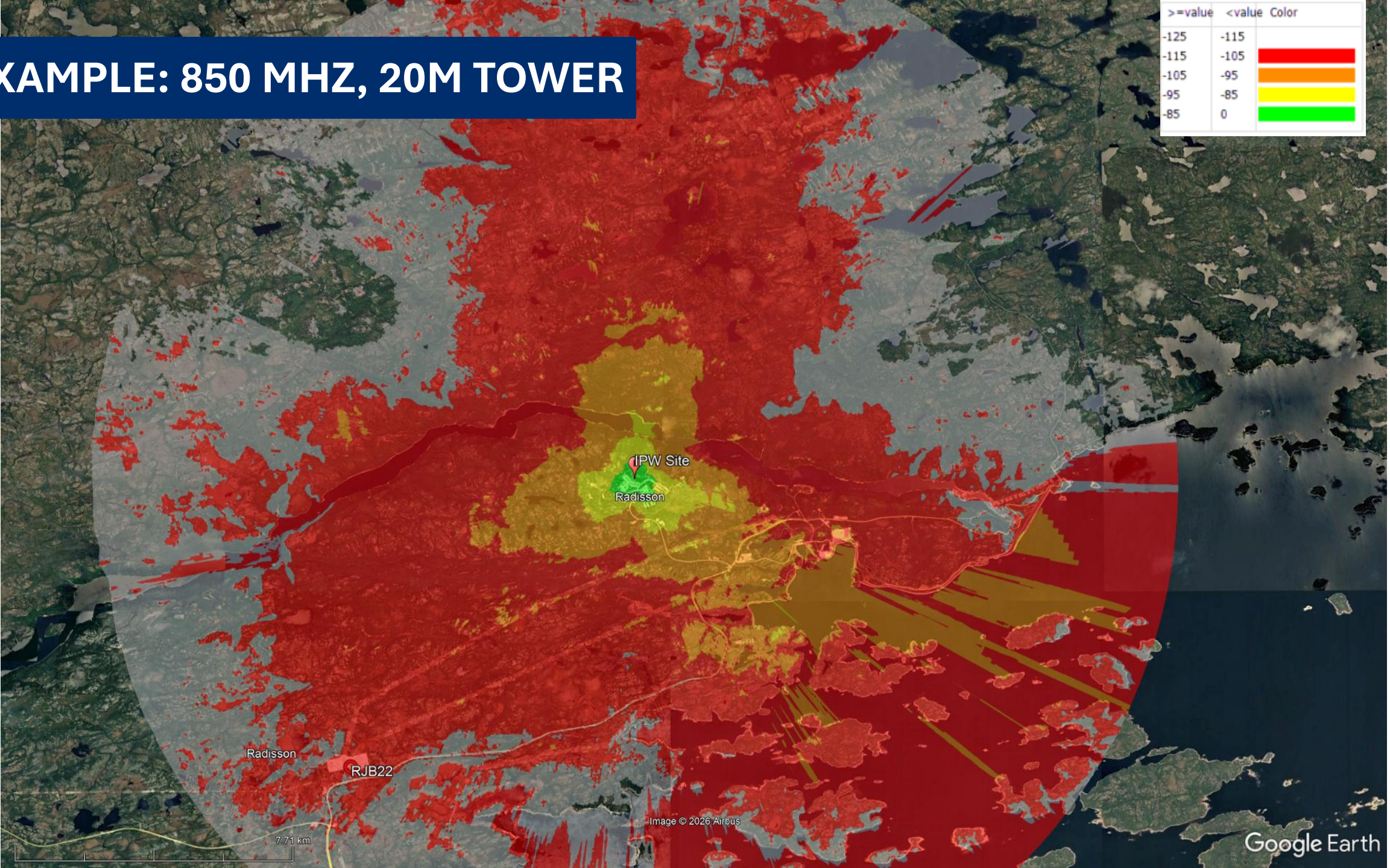
- Typical throughput of a 10 MHz channel can be 100 Mbps DL and 50 Mbps UL
- ROM High level cost ranges:
  - New cellular site can cost anywhere from \$300,000 to \$2.5 M
  - LTE core can cost between \$50,000 and \$1 M
- Can compliment with other spectrum:
  - NCLL (3.9 GHz) & 6 GHz License Exempt Bands
  - 900 MHz access radio license for up to 3 MHz BW



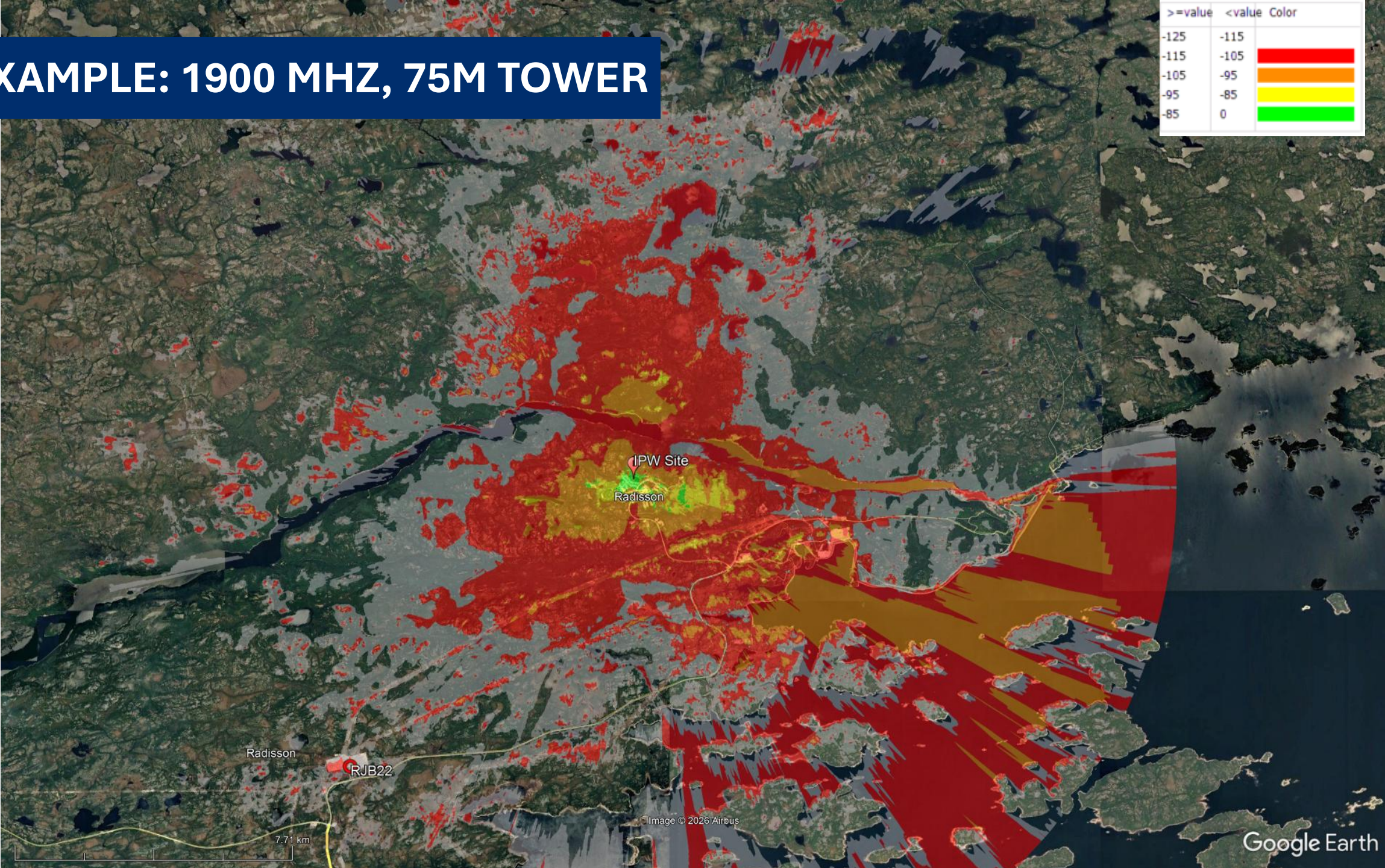
# EXAMPLE: 1900 MHZ, 20M TOWER



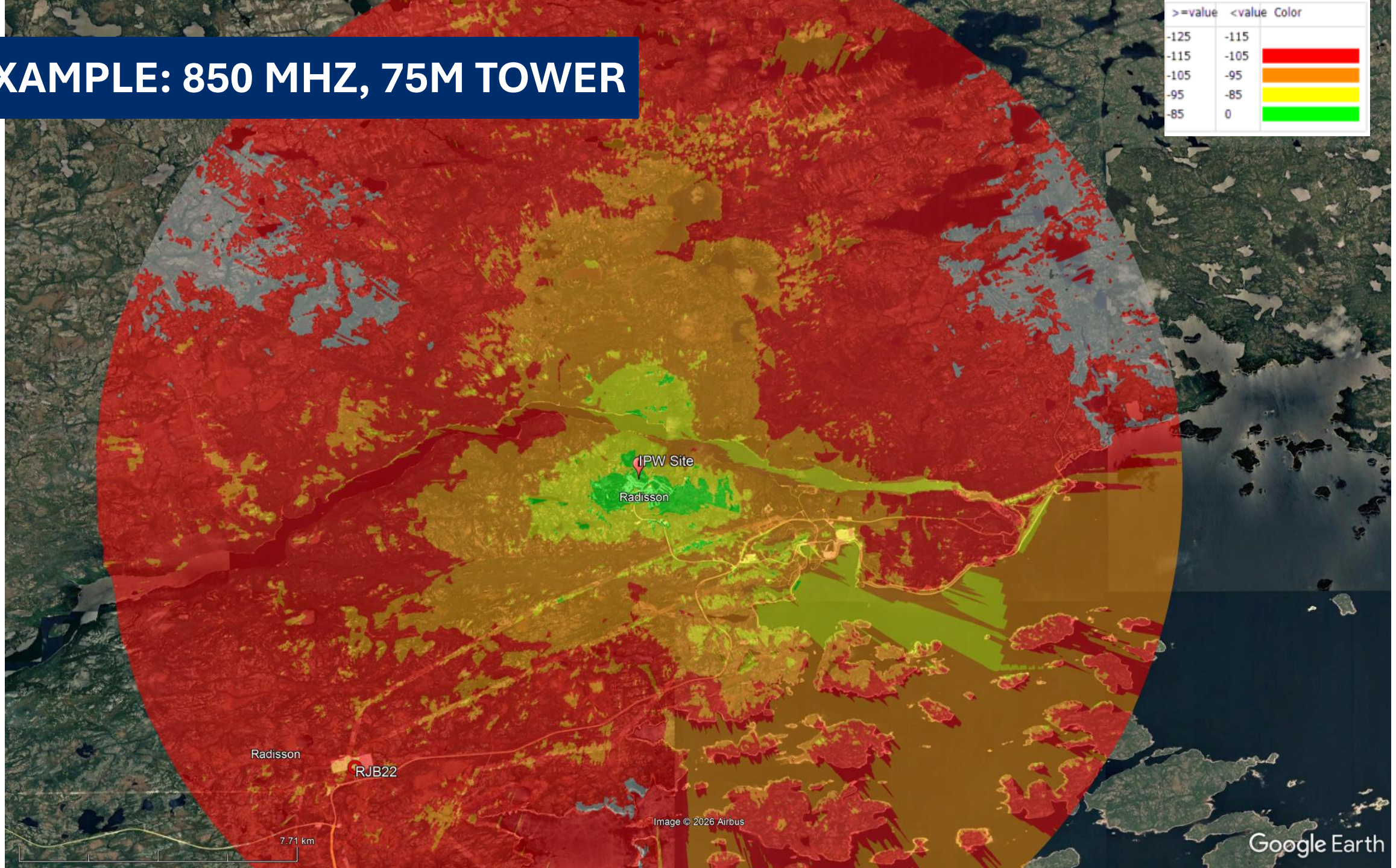
# EXAMPLE: 850 MHZ, 20M TOWER



# EXAMPLE: 1900 MHZ, 75M TOWER



# EXAMPLE: 850 MHZ, 75M TOWER



# POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Some potential available funding and or loan guarantees programs listed here. The list may not be complete or apply to all situations

| Funding Stream                                               | Funding Type   | Eligible Applicants                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Telecom Eligibility                                                                                                      | Funding Amount                           | Key Requirements                                                                                          | Deadline                    | Link                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Canada Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program (ILGP)</b>       | Loan Guarantee | Indigenous groups and wholly-owned subsidiaries                                                                                                                                                                       | Backbone fibre<br>Backbone MW<br>Cellular                                                                                | \$20M–\$1B guarantee                     | Indigenous ownership; project must be a major revenue-generating infrastructure project                   | Ongoing                     | <a href="https://cilgc-cgpac.ca/en/program">https://cilgc-cgpac.ca/en/program</a>                                                                                   |
| <b>First Nations Finance Authority (FNFA)</b>                | Loan           | FNFA member First Nations                                                                                                                                                                                             | Backbone fibre<br>Backbone MW<br>Cellular                                                                                | Based on borrowing capacity              | Must be FNFA member and pledge eligible revenues                                                          | Ongoing                     | <a href="https://fnfa.ca/en/for-first-nations/financing/eligible-revenues-projects/">https://fnfa.ca/en/for-first-nations/financing/eligible-revenues-projects/</a> |
| <b>First Nations Infrastructure Fund (FNIF)</b>              | Grant          | First Nations, governments, organizations, partnerships                                                                                                                                                               | Backbone fibre<br>Backbone MW<br>Cellular                                                                                | Typically up to \$10M/year per recipient | Usually identified through FNIIP process                                                                  | Annual FNIIP cycle          | <a href="https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1497275878022/1533645265362">https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1497275878022/1533645265362</a>                                   |
| <b>New Fiscal Relationship (NFR) Grant</b>                   | Grant          | First Nations, Tribal Councils, FN-led entities                                                                                                                                                                       | Backbone fibre<br>Backbone MW<br>Cellular                                                                                | Up to \$150M/year per recipient          | Flexible community-priority funding                                                                       | September annually          | <a href="https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1527080791657/1527080813525">https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1527080791657/1527080813525</a>                                   |
| <b>Indigenous Community Infrastructure Initiative (ICII)</b> | Loan           | Indigenous communities, Indigenous corporations, organizations, sponsors                                                                                                                                              | Backbone fibre<br>Backbone MW<br>Cellular                                                                                | \$5M–\$100M loan                         | Minimum 20% sponsor/community contribution; financing gap must be demonstrated; CIB priority sector       | Ongoing                     | <a href="https://cib-bic.ca/en/indigenous-community-infrastructure/">https://cib-bic.ca/en/indigenous-community-infrastructure/</a>                                 |
| <b>Capital Facilities and Maintenance Program (CFMP)</b>     | Grant          | First Nations and eligible recipients                                                                                                                                                                                 | (Connectivity not primary objective, however project may still be eligible)<br>Backbone fibre<br>Backbone MW<br>Cellular | Project dependent                        | Minor capital (<\$1.5M), Major Capital (>\$1.5M), O&M funding streams                                     | Ongoing                     | <a href="#">Transfer Payment Program Terms and Conditions: Contributions to support the construction and maintenance of community infrastructure</a>                |
| <b>BC First Nations Equity Financing Program (FNEFP) :</b>   | Loan           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B.C.-based Indigenous Governing Bodies</li> <li>First Nations Development Corporations</li> <li>Other entities owned and controlled by an Indigenous Governing Body</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                          | Loan guarantee of 20%                    | Small and Medium between \$25 M and \$125 M<br>Large Projects with total capital costs over \$125 Million | Starting Spring/summer 2026 | <a href="#">First Nations Equity Financing Program - Province of British Columbia</a>                                                                               |



# POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

| Funding Stream                                  | Funding Type | Eligible Applicants                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Telecom Eligibility                       | Funding Amount | Key Requirements | Deadline                                               | Link                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CRTC Broadband Fund (Indigenous Stream):</b> |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                           |                |                  | Consultations from March 18 2026 to September 18, 2026 | <a href="#">Share your thoughts about developing an Indigenous stream of the Broadband Fund   CRTC.</a>                            |
| <b>Connecting Communities BC (CCBC):</b>        | Grant        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A corporation, either for profit or not-for-profit</li> <li>• An Indigenous entity including:</li> <li>• A public sector body</li> <li>• A partnership, joint venture or consortium</li> </ul> | Backbone fibre<br>Backbone MW<br>Cellular |                |                  | Ongoing                                                | <a href="#">Connecting Communities BC - Province of British Columbia</a>                                                           |
| <b>Cellular Expansion Fund (CEF)</b>            | Grant        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                           |                |                  | Ongoing                                                | <a href="#">Cellular Expansion Fund   Northern Development</a><br>Application Guide:<br><a href="#">ccbc_application-guide.pdf</a> |
| <b>CRTC Broadband Fund (Call 4):</b>            | Grant        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Fiber<br>FWA (not mobility)               |                |                  | Oct 15 2026                                            | <a href="#">Application Guide for the 9 April 2026 Call for Applications for the Broadband Fund   CRTC</a>                         |



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## RECAP

- Demand for IPW spectrum was higher than expected
- Other spectrum bands are available (e.g. NCLL)
- Providing solutions for several use cases and clients is the only way to improve the business case
- Service level and costs are dependent on many factors
- Several funding and loan programs may be useful with deployments
- YRH is here to assist you with your telecom projects
- Please reach out to the ISED team to discuss alternative spectrum options:  
[indigenousspectrumpolicyteam-equipedepolitiqueduspectreautoch@ised-isde.gc.ca](mailto:indigenousspectrumpolicyteam-equipedepolitiqueduspectreautoch@ised-isde.gc.ca)



**Q&A**



# THANK YOU

Contact Information:

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