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FACT SHEET FOR MEDIA | NOVEMBER 2026

The proposed 600-foot tower on Pelee Island

Key facts on the project, the birds and species at risk, the review gap and where things stand. Numbers in grey brackets refer to the sources listed at the end. Everything here comes from public records or from PIBO's filings to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

At a glance

The ask: PIBO has asked the federal government to designate the tower for a full impact assessment under subsection 9(1) of the Impact Assessment Act. [1, 2]

The decision: the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada must decide by **January 19th, 2027**. [3]

The public response: 27,495 individual letters from 27,293 people went to the Minister and the Agency in five days, from all 13 Canadian provinces and territories, 49 of 50 U.S. states and 38 countries and territories. More than 30,000 had been signed by November 23rd. [4]

PIBO's position, adopted by its Board: "No comprehensive environmental assessment of the Tower's impact has been completed. At the very minimum, a full federal environmental assessment must be completed before any approval, one that takes into consideration species at risk and their critical habitat, migratory birds and the airspace they use, and alternative locations. In every scenario, it is PIBO's position that it is scientifically irresponsible to build a tower of this size on Pelee Island, at the junction of two major avian flyways, and that the Tower should not be built on Pelee Island." PIBO supports telecommunications that improve Canadians' communications, built responsibly.

What Canadians can do: forward their copy of the letter to their MP and ask them to urge the Minister to designate the project. More at pibo.ca/en/tower.

1. What it is and who wants to build it

- **A U.S.-based trading firm.** The proponent is a U.S.-based trading firm. [5, 1]
- **What it is for.** The company told PIBO the tower would carry microwave dishes transmitting its trading data between Chicago and New Jersey. [1, 6]
- **Why microwaves.** Radio signals through the air travel faster than light through glass fibre, and a straight line through the air is shorter than a cable route. In high-speed trading, fractions of a millisecond are worth money. [7]
- **Part of a chain.** Birds Canada notes that long-distance microwave links of this kind are typically built as a chain of towers. [6, 8]

2. The tower in numbers

- **182.9 metres (600 feet)** tall: about the height of a 60-storey building. [5, 6]
- **Guyed** (held up by guy wires) and **lit** with obstruction lights. The public record gives no lighting specification. [5, 6]
- **2.6 times** the tallest antenna structure on the island today (70 metres). [9]

- **Three times** the 199-foot maximum the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends for new towers. It also recommends free-standing rather than guyed towers, kept away from places where birds concentrate and from migration routes. [10]
- **Six times** the height of a 29.9-metre self-supporting tower in Alberta that the Agency decided in 2019 did not need an assessment, partly because it had no guy wires and was "not situated between major staging areas". The Pelee tower would stand on the island route between Fish Point and Point Pelee. [6, 11]
- **Footprint.** A fenced compound of about 276 m² inside a lease area of 8,941 m² (about 0.9 hectares). Vegetation and topsoil would be stripped across the central and eastern parts of the site. [12]
- **Where.** 1246 Centre Dyke Road, on land owned by the Township of Pelee and leased to the company. [5, 13]

3. What the island gets

- **Its stated purpose is the company's trading data.** Nothing that has been made public describes it as a phone, internet or emergency-services tower for islanders. [1, 6]
- **The big carriers are already here.** Bell, TELUS and Cogeco already hold radio licences at tower sites on the island, on structures of 30 to 47 metres. [9]
- **The one known local benefit is rent.** The Township owns the land and leases it to the company. The lease terms, including the rent, have not been made public. PIBO has asked for them under freedom of information; the Township has extended its decision to December 23rd, 2026. [13, 14]

4. Why birds die at towers like this

- **How it happens.** Most songbirds migrate at night. On overcast nights, steady-burning lights on tall towers draw them in; they circle and strike the tower and, above all, its guy wires. Height, guy wires and steady lights are the features most tied to bird deaths. [15, 16, 17]
- **6.8 million** birds a year are estimated to be killed at communication towers in the United States and Canada. [15]
- **1 to 9 per cent** of the entire population of each of 13 bird species of conservation concern is estimated to be killed at towers every year. [16]
- **16 times** more bird deaths at guyed towers than at unguyed towers of similar height, in a study of 24 towers in Michigan. [17]
- **50 to 71 per cent** fewer deaths at towers lit only with flashing lights than at towers that also used steady-burning lights. [18]
- **Birds Canada:** "A tower of this size and nature poses risks to birds due to the proposed height, guy wires, and steady-burning lights which can all contribute to bird collisions and mortality." [19]

5. Why Pelee Island is the wrong place

- **Where the flyways meet.** Pelee Island is where the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways meet, on one of the main crossing routes over western Lake Erie. [6, 20]
- **Recognized globally.** The island's natural areas are a globally significant Important Bird Area, and Birds Canada states that the island is a Key Biodiversity Area. The American Bird Conservancy places the island in its Sandusky to Point Pelee corridor, rated "Critically Important", its highest category. [6, 2, 21]
- **Next door at Point Pelee:** "It is likely that several million songbirds migrate through the Park each year." [6]
- **PIBO's count.** Standardized daily migration monitoring at Fish Point since 2003. In 2024 and 2025 alone, daily counts and banding totalled more than 660,000 birds, of 208 and 217 species. [6]
- **320 bird species** have been recorded on Pelee Island. [6, 22]
- **A night highway.** Microphones recording night flight calls picked up 3.0 times as many over Pelee Island as over the nearby mainland in spring, and 1.8 times as many in fall. [23]

- **Breeding hot spot.** In the breeding bird atlas square around the site, 65 species were confirmed breeding, more than in any of the other 37 squares in the atlas's Essex region (Point Pelee's square had 56). [6, 24]
- **The airspace is habitat.** The air migrants fly through is part of their habitat, as much as the woods where they rest. The tower would occupy 182.9 metres of it. [6, 25]

6. Species and habitat at risk

- **Seven species with federal critical habitat.** The site lies within areas where Environment and Climate Change Canada maps critical habitat for seven species listed under the Species at Risk Act: Red-headed Woodpecker, Blue Racer, Eastern Foxsnake (Carolinian population), Spotted Turtle, Spiny Softshell, Blanding's Turtle (Great Lakes/St. Lawrence population) and Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus. [6, 26]
- **The Blue Racer** is found in Canada only on Pelee Island, and its federal recovery strategy identifies critical habitat only there. Most of the tower site is cultural meadow, a habitat type the strategy lists. [6, 27]
- **Ten endangered or threatened birds** show breeding evidence in the area around the site, including the Prothonotary Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-breasted Chat and Wood Thrush. [6, 24]
- **34 federally listed species at risk** have been recorded on the island. [6, 22]
- **Protected places all around.** The Red Cedar Savannah Area of Natural and Scientific Interest adjoins the site. Fish Point and Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserves are at the island's southern and northeastern tips, and Point Pelee National Park is nearby. [6]
- **More of the island's rare life:** federal critical habitat for the Small-mouthed Salamander; Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus; the Lake Erie Watersnake; and Carolinian plants such as Kentucky Coffee-tree and Wild Hyacinth. [28, 29, 30]
- **Ontario has stepped back.** In 2025 Ontario replaced its Endangered Species Act with the Species Conservation Act, 2025, narrowing the habitat it protects. The new Act does not apply to migratory birds listed under the federal Act, leaving the federal government as the main line of protection. [6, 31, 32]

7. No real environmental review

- **No government has assessed the tower.** It is not on the federal list of projects that automatically need an impact assessment. [3]
- **The Township doesn't review it.** Its staff report says the Township "is not the approval body for telecommunications towers" and "does not review or evaluate the tower siting or construction in any manner". [33]
- **The company says other rules don't apply:** "As with other federal undertakings such as airports, local and provincial regulations do not apply to this telecommunications proposal." [33]
- **The federal licensing body relies on the company's word.** ISED's procedure makes the company "responsible for ensuring" environmental compliance, and ISED told PIBO it does not verify those attestations. [6, 34]
- **The company's own study** counted birds on two visits, June 16th and July 3rd, 2025, outside both migration seasons. It did not assess bird collisions at all, and it did not mention the Blue Racer, the Eastern Foxsnake or any snake. [12, 6]
- **What a proper snake survey takes.** Ontario's survey protocol for species-at-risk snakes says "10 surveys would be required to determine absence with 95% confidence". [6]

8. The rules: across the lake, and here

- **In the United States,** any new tower over 450 feet needs a federal environmental assessment before it can be built, a rule adopted in 2011 because of the risk to migratory birds. At 600 feet, this tower would need one. [35, 36]
- **Kelleys Island, Ohio,** about 17 km south of the site: a self-supporting microwave tower, now 101 metres tall, went through a federal environmental assessment before it was built in 2018. The Pelee Island structure would be guyed and 1.8 times as tall. [37]

- **In Canada,** a tower like this is not on the list of projects that need a federal impact assessment. The only federal route to one is designation, which is what PIBO has asked for. [3, 1]

9. The Township's role

- **The Township is the landlord.** Council authorized an agreement with the company in December 2023, gave the ground lease final reading in June 2025 and amended it in October 2025, each 2025 lease decision after a closed session. All of this came before the Township's formal concurrence. [13]
- **Concurrence on November 12th, 2025.** The Township gave its sign-off in the federal process by By-law 2025-60. Concurrence is not a licence: the federal licence comes from ISED, and none had been issued as of PIBO's last check on November 16th, 2026. [13, 9]
- **Consultation.** Under ISED's default process, the company mails notice to properties within three times the tower height (about 550 metres here), publishes a newspaper notice and allows 30 days for comment. No public meeting is required, and none appears in the Township's record. [34, 33]
- **A different standard for another proposal.** One month after concurring with this tower, Council refused another company's tower and directed it to undertake "a more transparent public consultation". [38]
- **A new Council** took office on November 17th, 2026.

10. Where things stand

- **October 6th:** PIBO asked the Minister to designate the tower for a full impact assessment. **October 20th:** PIBO filed its supplement, with a bird-science report by Dr. Dan Mennill. **October 21st:** the Agency began considering the request. **November 16th:** PIBO filed its final submission. [1, 6, 3, 2]
- **Who wrote.** 155 writers who live on Pelee Island and 281 who own property there (from the first 24,598 letters read); 210 scientists, biologists and ornithologists, in their own words. 7,422 letters carried comments in the writer's own words; the concerns raised most often were habitat, the need for a federal assessment, siting and design, and bird collisions. [4]
- **Support on the record** from Senator Yvonne Boyer, BirdLife International, Birds Canada, American Bird Conservancy, Nature Canada, FLAP Canada, Black Swamp Bird Observatory, the Pelee Island Property Owners Association and university scientists. [2, 8]
- **Caldwell First Nation,** whose traditional territory includes Pelee Island, has written to ISED and to federal ministers stating that it was not meaningfully engaged before the project advanced. [39]
- **Timing matters:** under the Act, once a federal authority such as ISED licenses the tower, it can no longer be designated. [3, 9]
- **Decision:** by January 19th, 2027. [3]

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Sources

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7. McKay Brothers, "Wall Street gains an edge by trading over microwaves".
8. Letters to the Minister and the Agency on the record, listed in PIBO's final submission, Attachment 1.
9. ISED Spectrum Management System, register searches within 10 km of the site (PIBO searches, latest 16 November 2026).
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20. Township of Pelee website (flyways).
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