

# Upcoming Cell Tower Upgrades in Saskatoon

## ISSUE

SaskTel notified the Administration of major system upgrades to their cellular network planned to begin in 2022. Other cellular companies are also planning upgrades to their networks. This includes a range of upgrades to existing towers in many locations throughout Saskatoon. As these planned upgrades will be noticeable across the city, Administration is providing this update related to the current notification and consultation process in place for telecommunication infrastructure.

## BACKGROUND

Radiocommunication infrastructure, including cell towers, are regulated and authorized by Industry Canada as antenna systems and antenna-supporting structures. These federal regulations require the proponent to consult with municipalities and the general public, as part of their process.

In Saskatoon, [Policy No. C09-037, Antenna Systems](#) (Policy) provides a set of requirements which are consistent with those of Industry Canada and, provides guidance for the orderly development of these structures. This includes specific requirements for a public consultation process to provide an opportunity for members of the public to be informed and comment on the proposed installations. The Policy also outlines the technical review process that is undertaken by Administration and provides a set of criteria by which Administration evaluates the installations, in order to provide a letter of concurrence or non-concurrence to Industry Canada for their consideration. It is important to note that the City of Saskatoon (City) cannot prevent a proponent from obtaining permission for their installation from Industry Canada.

In February 2014, Industry Canada announced changes to their Antenna Tower Siting Policy which required telecommunication companies to work closely with local communities when proposing new communication towers. Since that time, consultation has been required for commercial antenna structures, no matter what the height of the tower or distance to residential areas. In 2016, an amendment to Bylaw 8770, Zoning Bylaw, 2009 (Zoning Bylaw) was approved to ensure consistency between the Zoning Bylaw and Antenna Systems Policy, as well as the federal regulations.

## CURRENT STATUS

### Current Antenna Systems Policy Requirements

The Antenna Systems Policy provides requirements for the public consultation process, as well as evaluation criteria for Administration to use for these submissions.

As per the Policy, the proponent of any antenna-supporting infrastructure is required to undertake the consultation as outlined (with some exceptions noted in the policy). These requirements include:

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- 1) Sending a notification package to property owners located within 200 metres of the proposed installation, as well as to the relevant Community Association President, the Ward Councillor, Community Services Division and Industry Canada;
- 2) Provide a 30-day period for comments to be submitted;
- 3) For antenna-supporting structures 30 metres or more in height, a notice must also be placed in The StarPhoenix; and
- 4) Where substantive public concern is created by the proposal, a public information meeting may be required and would be required to conform to the overall objectives of the City's engagement process.

Administration does not conduct this consultation process but does provide supporting information to the proponent, which includes:

- 1) Mailing addresses for property owners for the notification.
- 2) Suggestions and guidance related to appropriate meeting locations.
- 3) Guidance related to the requirements of the Policy.

Following the consultation process, Administration receives and reviews the documentation provided by the proponent in order and to determine if they have met the Policy requirements.

### Current Zoning Bylaw Regulations

Section 5.27 of the Zoning Bylaw outlines that commercial communication towers erected in any zoning district shall be subject to public consultation processes, as required by the Policy. Exceptions to this requirement, including amateur radio antennas and communication towers used for temporary events, are also included in the Policy. Appropriate setback guidelines are provided for communication towers consistent with the zoning district in which they are located.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

As noted above, the current Policy lays out requirements for the proponents, and provides the criteria by which Administration evaluates the submissions.

- In cases where the proponent has completed the notification and/or public information meeting as required by the Policy, and other criteria are met, Administration provides a letter of concurrence for the application to Industry Canada.
- Where a proponent has met the requirements, but the proposal remains contentious, Administration provides a letter of non-concurrence to Industry Canada for their consideration.

As a result of the number of upgrades planned by cellular companies to be undertaken in 2022, Administration expects there will be a heightened level of interest from residents. As the role of the City is to provide technical review of the submissions, and

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to ensure the required consultation processes occur, Administration has a limited role in resolving questions or concerns raised by residents.

The following steps will be taken by Administration to provide supporting communications and assistance to residents that contact the City:

- 1) Work with the cellular companies to streamline points of contact, for members of the public, to their relevant staff for direct communications and to ensure their communication materials clarify roles and responsibilities throughout this process;
- 2) Key messages and a Frequently Asked Questions document will be created and shared with relevant departments including Service Saskatoon; and
- 3) Create a page on the City's website to provide the above information in one location and ensure appropriate contacts for the relevant companies and Industry Canada are included.

If additional opportunities for public consultation on any or all proposed installations are warranted, Administration will encourage the relevant cellular company to undertake these activities.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

An application for an antenna-supporting structure has a fee of \$800. This does not include the cost of any permits or other applications, which may be required for the construction of the structure. The proponent is also responsible for all the costs associated with the notification and public information meeting.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Depending on the proposed installation sites, proponents may also need to engage with Meewasin if a site is located within the Meewasin Conservation Zone. As well, if an installation is to be on a heritage building or site, consultation with the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee would be required.

Installation on city-owned properties, including municipal reserve and right of ways among others, are reviewed administratively for technical considerations prior to the start of any public consultation process. Where city-owned land is used for an installation, a lease agreement is required.

### **NEXT STEPS**

As the cellular companies bring forward their planned tower upgrades, Administration will participate in the consultation process as outlined in the current process and described above.

### **REPORT APPROVAL**

Written by: Lesley Anderson, Director of Planning and Development  
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