

Letter - Commercial Drone Permit Process Proposal

Proposal for Streamlining the Commercial Drone Application Process: Introduction of a Commercial Drone Permit Program

In recent years, the use of drones has expanded rapidly, providing significant benefits across various sectors including photo and video, agriculture, public safety and broadcast news. However, the current application process for obtaining permission to fly drones in the city can be cumbersome and time-consuming, hindering efficiency and innovation. Weather significantly impacts pilots' ability to launch their drones, often requiring them to reapply for city permission, which can result in lost revenue and missed broadcast opportunities.

To address these challenges, we propose the establishment of a streamlined Commercial Drone Permit Program. This program aims to simplify the application process, maintain compliance, and foster a more positive and efficient use of drone technology within the city.

Proposal Overview

The Commercial Drone Permit Program will require a one-time application that includes the following documents:

1. Drone Pilot Certificate
2. Drone Certificate of Registration
3. Drone Insurance Policy
4. Additional Insured City of Saskatoon Endorsement

Upon approval, pilots will be granted a permit allowing them to fly drones at any time, provided they adhere to Transport Canada laws and regulations and the other Saskatoon specific operational guidelines below.

Operational Guidelines

1. **Flight Path Notification:** Pilots must email the city their flight path at least two hours in advance of flying.
2. **Restricted Areas:** Pilots are prohibited from flying over events and construction sites. Violation of any drone regulation set forth by Transport Canada will result in the revocation of the permit to operate within the City of Saskatoon's jurisdiction.
3. **Annual Permit Fee:** The city will collect a yearly permit fee and updated documentation from individuals and companies to maintain their permit status.

Advantages for Commercial Drone Pilots

1. **Increased Revenue Opportunities:** Pilots can take on more clients without the concern of long approval wait times, allowing for better business continuity.
2. **Weather Flexibility:** If weather conditions are unfavourable for a planned drone flight, pilots will have the flexibility to reschedule quickly, ensuring no lost revenue or broadcast coverage.
3. **Simplified Documentation Process:** Pilots are freed from the repetitive task of resubmitting documentation for each flight request and the lengthy wait of up to two weeks for application approval.
4. **Quick Access to Airspace for News Coverage:** Pilots will have the ability to quickly access airspace to document breaking news stories, providing timely and valuable coverage to Saskatoon citizens from media outlets.

Benefits for the City

1. **Reduced Administrative Workload:** The streamlined process will significantly reduce the paperwork and meetings required for granting flight permissions.
2. **Simplified Monitoring:** A centralized permit system will streamline tracking compliance with city regulations.
3. **Revenue Generation:** The annual permit fees will provide a new source of revenue for the city.

Implementation Plan

1. **Development Phase:** Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to design the application portal and establish the administrative framework.
2. **Pilot Testing:** Launch a pilot program to test the system, gather feedback, and make necessary adjustments.
3. **Full Rollout:** Implement the Drone Permit Program citywide, accompanied by a public awareness campaign to inform drone operators about the new system.

Conclusion

The Drone Permit Program presents a viable solution to modernize the application process for drone operations within the city, without changing the current by-law. By streamlining the application process, both drone pilots and the city will experience significant benefits, including increased efficiency, reduced administrative burden, and simplified monitoring. We believe this program will foster a more innovative and responsive environment for drone usage, contributing to the city's growth and technological advancement.

We look forward to advancing discussion on this proposal and working together to bring this vision to fruition.

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Thank you for considering this proposal. We will touch base in two weeks to inquire about the status. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to us at any time.