

**DATE:** November 29, 2011

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent

**SUBJECT:** Proposed TELUS Cell Phone Tower in Vicinity of Greenfield School

**ORIGINATOR:** Brian Smith, Executive Director, Finance and Infrastructure

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Josephine Duquette, Jonathan Dziadyk, Roland Labbe, Fred Matthews, Leah Milton, Bonnie Zack

**REFERENCE:** N/A

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**ISSUE**

TELUS has identified a need to increase cell phone capacity in the geographic area containing Greenfield School. TELUS has identified a desired location, negotiated a location agreement with the Greenfield Baptist Church to construct a cell phone tower on the Church's property, and initiated the approval process for installation. Some residents in the neighbourhood and some parents, students and staff at Greenfield School are concerned about exposure to additional radiofrequencies (RFs) associated with cell phone towers.

**ACTION REQUESTED**

The Board of Trustees has requested that Administration provide further information for the Board in considering whether to formulate a position on the issue.

**BACKGROUND**

Telecommunication towers are regulated by Industry Canada, through Policy CPC-2-0-03, on the advice of Health Canada. Although Industry Canada has sole jurisdiction in telecommunication, they consult local policies from land use authorities, if available. The City of Edmonton has Policy C471B, which outlines criteria for preferred locations and public engagement related to the placement of cell phone and telecommunications towers.

TELUS hosted a Public Open House on September 28, 2011, consistent with and observed by the City of Edmonton. City Policy C471B's procedure stipulates that the *owner* of property within a defined radius be notified. Greenfield School was notified of the meeting, however District planning staff were not notified. No staff attended the meeting on behalf of the District.

**RELATED FACTS**

There is additional information that the Board may want to consider:

- Industry Canada regulates telecommunications on the advice of Health Canada, whose positions are based on the review of hundreds of studies on the biological effects of RF energy. An information sheet from Health Canada entitled *Wireless Device Safety* is attached for information (ATTACHMENT I). As a result of Health Canada research and guidelines, Industry Canada does not acknowledge concerns based on perceived health issues.
- The City of Edmonton has a policy for siting these facilities and a pamphlet from the City entitled *Any Questions About Telecommunications Facilities?* is attached for information (ATTACHMENT II).

- The telecommunication tower proposed at Greenfield Baptist Church conforms to both the municipal and federal guidelines.
- District administration works regularly with the City to determine appropriate land uses in the vicinity of schools, and will request that in regard to telecommunications towers, the Planning department must be contacted in addition to contacting schools directly.
- Some staff at Greenfield School have inquired about the OH&S implications of the proposed tower; current OH&S policies do not address radiofrequencies (RF).
- Some organizations have policies regarding the siting of telecommunication towers, however, most defer to federal regulation and municipal guidelines to address the issue (ATTACHMENT III).

**OPTIONS**

The following options are selected for consideration as they are deemed the most admissible:

- A. The District defers the decision to approve the cell phone tower installation to Industry Canada.
- B. The District submits a letter to Industry Canada, TELUS and the City of Edmonton objecting to tower.

**CONSIDERATIONS & ANALYSIS**

- A. Deferring the decision to approve the cell phone tower installation to Industry Canada would have the following implications:
  - Industry Canada and Health Canada would continue to monitor and review safety regulations relating to cell tower locations.
  - The City would continue to work with cell tower locators regarding their policy, and with Industry Canada.
- B. Submitting a district letter to Industry Canada, TELUS, and the City of Edmonton indicating non-support for the proposed cell tower would have the following implications:
  - It would be difficult for the District to establish grounds for opposition in relation to health concerns in a context where Health Canada and Industry Canada do not indicate that there are health concerns.
  - Concerns regarding the perceived health issues relating to cell towers are typically not sufficient information to influence Industry Canada during their decision-making process, thus a letter of non-support may not influence the decision made by Industry Canada regarding this proposal.

**NEXT STEPS**

If formally responding to the Greenfield proposed tower, time is of the essence for submitting input to be considered in the Industry Canada decision on the proposal.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- ATTACHMENT I *Wireless Device Safety* – Health Canada Fact Sheet
- ATTACHMENT II *Any Questions About Telecommunications Facilities?* – City of Edmonton Information Brochure
- ATTACHMENT III October 24, 2011 email from Matt Fisher to Trustee Colburn

JLD:sb



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Santé Canada

*Your health and  
safety... our priority.*

*Votre santé et votre  
sécurité... notre priorité.*

## Wireless Device Safety

Over the past decade, millions of Canadians have come to rely on wireless telecommunication technology, including cell phones, hand-held devices and wireless laptop computers.

All of these applications depend on the network of base stations set up across the country to transmit the radio signals necessary to operate these services. Base stations consist of electronic equipment and wireless antennas installed in buildings or on rooftops, towers and utility poles. A cell phone tower and a home computer's wireless router are both examples of base stations. Without such devices, what have become our everyday necessities and conveniences simply could not exist. As Canadians become increasingly connected electronically, it is also increasingly important that they remain confident in the safety of these systems.

### Health Canada's Radiofrequency Energy Guidelines (Safety Code 6)

Health Canada is committed to protecting the health and safety of Canadians. That is why we have developed safety guidelines that set limits for safe human exposure to electromagnetic energy from radiofrequency (RF) devices, including cell phones and base stations. Industry Canada, the national telecommunications regulator, requires that levels of radiofrequency energy coming from cell phones and cell phone towers fall below Health Canada's RF exposure limits.



Canada

## About Health Canada's RF Guidelines:

- Health Canada set limits after reviewing the results of hundreds of studies on the biological effects of RF energy. These limits are similar to those in other science-based international guidelines.
- The Code was evaluated by an Expert Panel of the Royal Society of Canada and was deemed to be an adequate representation of science currently available.
- The typical levels of RF energy that you find coming from base stations, including cell phone towers, are thousands of times below the limits for public exposure.
- The specified limits for public exposure apply to everyone—including the elderly, individuals with health concerns, children and pregnant women—and allow for continuous, 24/7 exposure.
- Based on information to date and the weight of evidence from ongoing scientific literature reviewed by Health Canada scientists, the Department is confident that Canada's RF exposure limits remain current and valid.



## Can people become ill from living near cell phone towers?

As long as exposures respect the limits set in Health Canada's guidelines, Health Canada has determined that there is no scientific reason to consider cell towers dangerous to the public.

## What is Health Canada doing to ensure the guidelines remain valid?

The safety of wireless communication devices such as Wi-Fi equipment, cell phones and BlackBerrys and their infrastructures, including base stations, is an area of ongoing study throughout the world. Health Canada scientists continually review scientific studies in this

area to ensure safety guidelines are sufficient for the protection of the health and safety of Canadians. Health Canada also continues to participate in international standards development and advisory bodies and undertakes its own focused research to support the development of its safety recommendations.

Further information on the safety limits can be found in a document entitled *Limits of Human Exposure to Radio-frequency Electromagnetic Fields in the Frequency Range from 3kHz to 300 GHz*, commonly referred to as *Safety Code 6*. This is the technical name of the Health Canada document that specifies the maximum recommended human exposure levels to RF energy from radiation-emitting devices.

This and other information can be found by visiting Health Canada's Web site: [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/radiation](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/radiation)

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### Where to apply

Planning and Development  
Current Planning Branch  
5th Floor, 10250 – 101 Street NW  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3P4  
Phone: 311 for 24-hour information and  
access to City of Edmonton programs and  
services. Or, if outside of Edmonton  
780-442-5311,  
Fax: 780-496-6054

Hours of operation: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday

This brochure is for information purposes  
and is not legally binding. Please review  
the official copy of the Policy for Siting  
Telecommunications Facilities at:  
[www.edmonton.ca/city-government/  
documents/C471B.doc](http://www.edmonton.ca/city-government/documents/C471B.doc)

Note: When you apply, personal information may be collected under the authority of: Section 33(c) of the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Section 642 of the Municipal Government Act and/or Section 63 of the Safety Codes Act. The information will be used to process your application(s) and your name and address may be included on reports that are available to the public. If you have any questions on the collection and use of this information, please contact our office.

June 2009

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## Any Questions About Telecommunications Facilities?

**You need to know...**



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### What are telecommunications facilities?

Telecommunications facilities include wireless point to point commercial facilities, including towers and antenna structures that serve cellular and personal computer (PC) communications, as well as radio and television broadcasters.

### Where can towers and other major structures go?

Telecommunications carriers are entitled to locate their facilities wherever they need to provide service.

### What is co-location?

Co-location occurs when carriers cooperatively place their devices in a single tower, building or location.

### Who makes the decision to approve telecommunications facilities?

Industry Canada regulates the telecommunications industry and issues operating licenses.

### What is the City of Edmonton's role?

The City, in cooperation with Industry Canada and the telecommunications industry, has established a Policy for Siting Telecommunications Facilities. This policy outlines a public consultation process that must be undertaken by a carrier if it proposes a tower that is a 'significant' structure, or a major facility that might have an impact on the surrounding community.

### What does public consultation involve?

For towers or structures considered to be significant, the carrier must first meet with the local community league, City planning staff, and, where appropriate, local councillors to discuss the proposal. Once a preferred location is determined, a public meeting must be held. Property owners located within a distance of six times the proposed tower height must be notified of the meeting. The carrier must keep a record of the meeting that includes concerns raised and responses provided. The carrier must also keep a record of those who attended. At the meeting, the carrier would provide a time frame and method by which comments may be submitted (if not at the meeting).

### Submission of Meeting Record and Explanatory Document

After the meeting, the carrier would provide the meeting record and document to the Planning and Development Department as well as relevant community league(s). This document would describe how the carrier has agreed to modify the proposed tower or facility, or its location to address the concerns raised at the meeting (as well as those received afterwards), and in particular how the issue of co-location at the site has been addressed. If concerns remain unaddressed, the document would explain why the carrier cannot, or chooses not to, address these concerns.

### Statement of Concurrence or Non-Concurrence to Industry Canada

After reviewing the carrier's meeting record, the City sends a letter to Industry Canada. The letter confirms whether the City is satisfied with the carrier's tower location and design, and whether the carrier has resolved community concerns.

#### Consultation is generally not necessary if:

- A tower is freestanding and 15 m (49.2 ft.) or less;
- A tower is mounted on a building where the combined height of the tower and the building is less than 23 m or six storeys, and the tower is less than 30% of building's height;
- A tower or facility is mounted on a building more than six storeys or 23 m in height;
- A tower is mounted on a downtown building;
- A tower or building-mounted device is separated from a residential or heritage area by an arterial roadway, and/or buffered by substantial tree cover, topography, or buildings;
- A tower/facility mounted on the top or side of any building where the antenna projects less than 2 m from the top or side;
- Replacement of original tower/equipment if similar in height and massing;
- The addition of antenna structures similar in massing to existing antenna structures on the existing tower.

**From:** Matt Fisher [mailto:nogreenfieldtower@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Mon 10/24/2011 12:44 AM  
**To:** Dave Colburn  
**Cc:** Catherine Ripley; Edgar Schmidt  
**Subject:** Additional Information - Installation of cell phone transmitter towers near schools

Dave Colburn  
Chair of Trustees

Dear Mr. Colburn:

On behalf of the Community of Greenfield Stewardship Committee, I am sending you, for your information, a briefing note that was prepared for the Member of Parliament James Rajotte, whom we met with to discuss the document and our community's concerns. This document has also been presented to the Honourable Minister Fred Horne and Edmonton Councillor Don Iveson. See the attachment for details.

For your consideration; it should be noted that school boards in British Columbia are beginning to ban any installation of cell phone transmitter towers near schools.

For example, the Vancouver School Board has the following policy:

*THAT VSB policy, KMG: Incompatible Land Uses Near Schools, be amended to include any installation of cellular antenna within 305M (1,000 feet) of a school as an incompatible use and that the Board be so notified of any potential installation.*

[Minutes of the Vancouver School Board](#) (January, 2005)

Vancouver School Board prohibits Cell Phone transmitter tower installation within 300 metres of school grounds.

Speaking in support of the motion, some trustees noted that:

- Research has been done on this item prior to it being thoroughly discussed at previous meetings;
- Although the research is not definitive on the possible negative effects of electro-magnetism on human physiology, due to the standard of diligence that the Board must assume in protecting students, it is only prudent to support the motion;
- There should be global caution exercised on the effects of electromagnetism, until it is conclusively proven to be harmless; and in the past, little consideration was given to the potential and cumulative ill effects of other products such as coal dust, asbestos or tobacco products, and the passage of time has shown that that lack of consideration has been a mistake.

A vote was taken on the motion, and it was declared CARRIED.

Thank you again for your time and consideration!

Matt Fisher  
(780) 977-3945