



Emergency Measures Radio Group Ottawa ARES

Two Names - One Group - One Purpose



2006-06-07

I am writing regarding the new City of Ottawa draft bylaws, sections 55 and 64, and specifically section 120 as it relates to Amateur Radio antennas and support structures.

My response is presented on behalf of the Emergency Measures Radio Group (EMRG), of which I am the Team Leader. EMRG is not a club, rather we are an organization that provides administration, planning, training and infrastructure, in order to make the services of Amateur radio available in the City of Ottawa as an Emergency Communications resource.

EMRG is a partner with the City of Ottawa, Office of Emergency Management (OEM). We have a signed agreement for EMRG to provide communications services in an Emergency, if required by OEM. In an emergency, our communications is typically used by Community Services to provide communications between shelters and City Hall, the Red Cross, etc. Our services were used by the City of Ottawa in the Ice Storm and the Power Outage.

Our concern with the bylaw as written, specifically section 120, is that it would inhibit a viable Amateur radio community in Ottawa, by limiting the number and location of Amateur antennas. This will cause a drastic decline in the number of Amateur radio operators in Ottawa over the next few years. The EMRG membership and skill sets are drawn from the local Amateur community, so if there are less Amateurs in Ottawa, there are less people to participate in EMRG. Installing antennas at home, and operating from home, is a critical component of the hobby. Therefore having a viable Amateur radio community in Ottawa requires the ability to install suitable antennas.

Not all Amateur radio operators participate in Emergency Communications. There is a pool of about 10% of the Amateur community who share an interest in Amateur radio and public service. This pool of people changes over time as personal circumstances change. There are numerous people who develop new solutions, design and test antennas or otherwise develop infrastructure that is used or adapted by EMRG for use as part of our Emergency Communications solutions.

There are many aspects to Amateur radio from friendship, to technical design, structured radio operations practices and the ability to assist in the community. Many people have started a technical career from their experience gained in Amateur radio and many radio related careers have looked favourably on applicants who were radio Amateurs. Even in today's world of computers and the Internet, there are plenty of exciting and technically challenging opportunities available through Amateur Radio.

We understand that with the ability to enjoy our hobby comes a responsibility to be good neighbours. The National Amateur radio organization, the Federal Government dept regulating Amateur radio, and most radio amateurs, agree that dialogue with neighbours is the first step in establishing any new significant radio antenna or supporting structure.

We also understand that guidelines and recommendations are required to help establish what our community feels is acceptable. For this reason, we support development of a set of guidelines for Amateur radio antennas and supporting structures. The City of Calgary Policy Guidelines provide an example of such a solution. (See Document Attached)

There are several specific points related to the draft bylaw that I am including for your consideration;

1. Amateur radio operates over many different bands (frequencies). The antenna physical size relates to the frequency being used, so there is no single antenna that can operate on all bands. Many Amateur radio operators will use more than one band, requiring more than one antenna, exceeding the one antenna limit in section 120.
 - **The 1 antenna limit does impact our group. In the event that during an emergency, a home radio station is being used to relay information between our local radio network, and the long distance (HF) network, a minimum of 2 antennas is required.**
2. There are 1500 Federally licensed amateur radio operators in Ottawa. At least half of these Amateurs are not active, live in apartments or have no interest in an external antenna. This draft bylaw, section 120, which specifies Amateur radio, will address a group of less than 750 residents of Ottawa.
3. The bylaw as written, which singles out Amateur radio antennas while allowing other antennas and support structures, is open to manipulation. People are creative and they will use terminology to describe their situation so that it falls within the guidelines of the bylaw.
 - For example, I have 2 antennas on the side of my house. One antenna is commonly referred to as a scanner antenna, although I use it for Amateur radio operation. Therefore I have one Amateur antenna and one scanner antenna, so I would then not be in violation of the bylaw. This would leave the situation open to the installation of Shortwave Antennas, Scanner Antennas, Modified TV antennas and other “creative” solutions.
4. Amateur radio is Federally regulated, so there are questions about jurisdiction in the regulation of Tower and antenna installations for Amateur radio.
 - Industry Canada, the Federal department that regulates Amateur radio, prefers that Amateurs and Municipalities find a mutually acceptable solution which is also our preference.

I would like to thank you for your time. I ask that you review the original reasons for attempting to restrict Amateur radio antennas and support structures, while thinking about the Amateur radio hobby, it's benefits, and the value to the community of having a viable Amateur radio community in the City of Ottawa.

Sincerely,

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