

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Safety Codes Services Update

Purpose:

To provide Council with an update on the provision of Safety Codes Services (Building Inspectors) for information prior to the introduction of new fees and charges.

Background:

As an accredited organization under the *Safety Codes Act*, the City of Fort Saskatchewan has the ability to issue permits and conduct inspections for building, electrical, plumbing, and gas. Through the 2015 budget process, Council funded an assessment of how these services are provided. The assessment determined improved quality service could be provided to residents and businesses by bringing Safety Codes Services partially in-house, as opposed to fully contracted. As a result, a Manager of Safety Codes Services position was created. The mandate of this position includes:

- ensuring compliance with the provincially required Unified Quality Management Plan (QMP);
- issuing large scale building permits (commercial and industrial);
- supervising the contract to provide the remainder of Safety Codes Services; and
- developing service improvements to ensure excellence in customer service and ultimately build a safe community.

Outcomes:

By bringing Safety Codes Services partially in-house and creating a dedicated position to oversee the provision of these services, improvements have been developed and are now prepared for implementation following adoption of new fees and charges, which will be addressed through Bylaw C7-17. Below is a summation of some of these improvements.

Occupancy Certificate

Occupancy Certificates are an accountability tracking tool used to indicate when it is safe to occupy a building. For the majority of construction projects, multiple Safety Codes Permits are needed. While the final Permit Service Report (PSR) for each individual permit indicates if compliance has been achieved, currently there is no clear indicator that compliance has been achieved for all permits, and that the building is deemed safe to occupy.

Issuance of Occupancy Certificates will simplify tracking and clearly indicate to all parties that a building is prepared for use. This indication will be provided through the following means:

- Occupancy Certificate provided to the permit applicant;
- sticker posted on the electrical panel at the time of final inspection;
- notice on the final inspection report; and
- notice on the final permit service report.

Occupancy Certificates are commonly used throughout the region, and as such the Planning & Development Department already receives requests for a copy of Occupancy Certificates. Other municipalities that issue Occupancy Certificates include:

- City of Spruce Grove;
- City of Leduc;
- City of Camrose;
- Town of Beaumont;
- Town of Stony Plain;
- Strathcona County; and
- Leduc County.

Pending adoption of the Fees & Charges Bylaw C7-17, Occupancy Certificates will be issued for any permits issued after May 1st. The program will be promoted among builders and occupants by posting a notice at the Planning & Development reception desk, emailing all builders within our registry, advertising in the local newspaper, and including an information leaflet with all Compliance Certificates.

Occasionally, a building may be occupied prior to issuance of an Occupancy Certificate. While all efforts will be taken to prevent these instances, when necessary enforcement will proceed in accordance with the following:

- Level 1: Notice provided to the permit applicant informing that occupancy has not been granted and assigning a timeline to correct deficiencies.
- Level 2: Fines applied based on a stepped system that considers severity of the deficiencies and history of offences.
- Level 3: proceed with eviction.

Fines are not imposed as a means to generate revenue, but as a means to communicate severity. To prepare for implementation of Occupancy Certificates, the following fees are being introduced into the Fees & Charges Bylaw, through Bylaw C7-17:

Occupying prior to issuance of Occupancy Certificate:		
- First offence (minor infractions with no life safety items)	per offence	\$ 500.00
- First offence (major infractions with life safety items)	per offence	\$ 750.00
- Second offence (minor infractions with no life safety items)	per offence	\$1,000.00
- Second offence (major infractions with life safety items)	per offence	\$1,500.00
- Third offence (minor infractions with no life safety items)	per offence	\$3,000.00
- Third offence (major infractions with life safety items)	per offence	\$5,500.00
Request for additional copies of Occupancy Certificate	per request	\$ 42.00

Kitchen Renovation Permits

Building permits ensure your investment is in accordance with the Alberta Building Code, and the work completed in your home is done safely. Kitchen renovations can be major investments. As such, a building permit is now being required to ensure the following:

- Proper separation and fire protection surrounds any cooktops or elements;
- electrical service capacity and receptacles are suitable to withstand additional demands;
- exhaust fans above the cooktop is vented correctly; and
- appliances that meet the Alberta Building Code requirements are used.

To facilitate building permits for kitchen renovations, no new fees are required as the permit aligns with the existing 'Additions/Renovations' fee.

Fee for Services Inspections

A Fee for Service Inspection is an inspection that is conducted at an owner's request to assess conformance with the Alberta Building Code. Instances where a Fee for Service Inspection may be requested include:

- Addressing a regulatory requirement, such as with daycare facilities;
- correcting a deficiency for a permit that was previously closed non-compliant;
- accommodating a desire for an additional inspection above the minimum requirement (i.e., inspection conducted at the time of framing); or
- satisfying a request from an insurance agency.

The inspection does not evaluate construction quality, as with a typical permit, nor does it assess the maintenance of the building, as with a home inspection. Instead the Fee for Service Inspection informs the customer of the building's conformance to the Code as evaluated by a Safety Codes Officer.

To facilitate a Fee for Services Inspection, the following fee is being introduced into the Fees & Charges Bylaw, through Bylaw C7-17:

Fee for Service Inspection	minimum fee PLUS	\$125.00
	per hour	\$125.00

Audit Results

The Safety Codes Council audits our provision of services on a regular basis to provide an objective and unbiased assessment of our services and alliance with the QMP. The most recent audit was completed in November and concluded:

"the City of Fort Saskatchewan, its staff, and contracted accredited agency provide services... with integrity and reasonableness in meeting with the intent of the Safety Codes Act and the approved Quality Management Plan".

While overall we are doing well, minor errors to be addressed include:

- revise application forms to ensure complete information is consistently provided;
- create a registry of QMP holders to ensure the most recent version is always used;
- update specific sections of final inspection reports to reflect QMP update; and
- enhance compliance monitoring for better follow up of outstanding items.

The Manager of Safety Codes Services is undertaking the work necessary to address the items identified by the Safety Codes Council.

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