

TO: CITY MANAGER

2000 FEBRUARY 11

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING

SUBJECT: COMPETITION IN CABLE SERVICES

PURPOSE: To provide Council with information and a recommendation regarding a request for Burnaby to send a letter of support to the Canadian Radio-television & Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) for an application for Skycable service in B.C.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** a letter be sent to Ms. Ursula Menke, Secretary General, Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N2, indicating Council's support for competition and technological advancement in the cable industry.

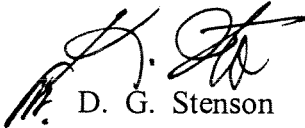
REPORT

At the Council meeting of 2000 February 7, under New Business, the matter of a letter from Skycable Inc. seeking support for their application to the CRTC to provide cable services to British Columbians was raised. At that time Council requested that a report be submitted on the feasibility and advisability of supporting competition in cable services. While the letter indicated that letters of support must be received by 2000 January 25, Skycable has advised that they would still appreciate receiving letters during the CRTC hearings. Skycable currently provides digital, wireless cable service in Manitoba and they wish to expand their service to B.C. According to the Skycable information, Skycable is a new technology that will provide residential and business customers in British Columbia with greater choice and service options for television, high speed Internet and two-way audio/video communication.

Staff contacted Skycable and were informed that the CRTC will be considering five different applications during its hearings during the week of February 21. These include two applications for digital, wireless cable service in B.C. from Skycable and Look Communications Inc. It is apparent that in both cases, if the CRTC were to grant permission to one of these companies to provide digital, wireless cable service to British Columbians that it would increase competition and choice for consumers, both in terms of television and Internet access. Staff were advised that Skycable would provide more choice to consumers in terms of their ability to select an Internet Service Provider (ISP), however, this is a matter which is most appropriately considered by the CRTC.

The more pertinent aspect for municipal consideration is the physical infrastructure required for increased cable services. In this regard, if there is increased competition in the cable industry in the future, the use of wireless technology would be considered advantageous in terms of not increasing the amount of infrastructure required to be accommodated within rights-of-way, tracked, and coordinated with other utilities. The wireless technology would require the installation of an antenna at the residence or business. Skycable has indicated that their main transmitter would be on Mount Seymour and that the antenna on individual sites would be 2 feet long and they do not expect to require any relay stations in Burnaby. Staff have advised Skycable staff that any antennae required for a relay station would need to conform to the specific requirements in the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw regarding antennae.

In general, the matter of permitting competition in cable services has little direct impact on the City of Burnaby and is generally not a local government issue. As a general principal though, it is recommended that Burnaby support competition in cable services, including the use of digital, wireless technology, in order to provide improved choice and ultimately, better service for consumers. It is not, however, considered appropriate for the City of Burnaby to support a particular company in its application to the CRTC, but should instead, encourage competition and technological advancement in the cable industry.


D. G. Stenson
Director Planning and Building

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