

Bayview and Wellington neighbours have say on nearby cell tower



By Brock Weir

Residents who could find themselves living adjacent to a new cell phone tower slated for the northwest corner of Bayview and Wellington had their first chance to sound off on the plan.

Altus Group, consultants retained by Bell Canada, held their first of two open houses last week at the Aurora Public Library to inform residents of plans for a new flag pole-style telecommunications tower behind the Longo's Plaza.

Consultants gave neighbours a rundown of what the 29 metre proposed cell tower will look like from various angles, including the Wellington streetscape, and to reassure residents of any health fears they might have about emissions from the device.

They cited Safety Code 6, the Health Canada parameter established to determine and regulate any effects of mobile phones, wi-fi, and similar devices. Information distributed at the meeting on behalf of Bell underscored that achieving and complying with Safety Code 6, which sets exposure limits, is essential before any tower can go forward.

For some residents attending the meeting, what was essential to them was not just making sure health code specifications were met, but also that the process was right.

A second meeting is scheduled for October 17 at 5 p.m. at the Aurora Public Library (see page 20) after the latest notification process went awry. To the west of the proposed cell tower site lies a complex of condominium townhouses. While some of these adjacent homeowners were directly notified of the public meeting by Bell's consultants, others simply received word through their local condominium board.

'We are pushing Bell and the Altus group to get with the process,' said a local condo board member who asked that his name not be used. 'We didn't get the mailing we were supposed to. We need 30 days' notice and we just got the letter two weeks ago. We also questioned [the location] of the tower. He said consultants said they had asked about the pole location, but they never did.'

'We wanted this area to be a park, but we gave it to Longo's because they promised they would preserve the greenery and put in more trees,' he said. 'They don't load and unload before 5 a.m. and they agreed to a number of conditions and they shouldn't have done [this pole placement] without consulting.'

Citing lands on three of the other four corners at the Bayview and Wellington intersection, the southern two, for instance, which are owned by Magna International and Toyota Canada, the resident questioned why Bell didn't get the green light to put the tower just south of the intersection.

?We are the cheapest houses around here and maybe they thought it would be easier to work with us, or work us,? he said with a laugh. ?I don't want that tower to be there simply because we have more than 30 kids in the Sandlewood Court area; I have a five year old daughter and I don't want her to live close to the tower.?

Tuesday's meeting didn't just attract neighbours who could be directly impacted by the proposed tower; it also afforded Aurora residents affected by the significantly larger cell phone tower built on the King side of Bathurst Street overlooking an Aurora neighbourhood a chance to have their opinions heard.

Councillor Sandra Humfryes was also on hand to support these residents' efforts to have something done about that site.

?There isn't a day that goes by where I don't have someone [mentioning it],? Councillor Humfryes told consultants. ?I think this [Longo's tower] would have been a whole different story if that other tower didn't happen. If there is any message you can bring back from a residential perspective, it's?come up here and take your executives out for a little drive and how would you like that in your back yard.

?If there is anything you can take back [from this] it is that Aurora is burned. Aurora is burned by that Tower and it is going to be very difficult for Bell to come here and do business.?