

Guildwood Village Cell Tower - Guildwood Village Community

The Issue

Some of you may already know that a 115 foot, 35 metre (11.5 storeys tall) cell tower will be built this May on the grounds of the Presbyterian Church located at 140 Guildwood Parkway (northeast corner of Guildwood Parkway and Livingston Road).

No one in our community, including our local ratepayers association (the GVCA) and our elected representatives, was consulted until after the contract with Bell Mobility had been finalised. Only then, were plans of impending construction sent to a handful of neighbours living within 100 metres of the proposed site.

Many residents are worried and have voiced their strong dismay that the Church failed to consult with the community on plans that would inevitably prove controversial. The siting of cell towers in highly urbanised settings is an internationally contentious issue and always merits full public consultation. The Church's failure to act in a neighbourly way that is customary in our village, has generated a distrust that promises to cause irreparable damage to the relationship between the Church and the Guildwood Community.

Opposition to the tower is growing daily with most of us simply asking for the proposed cell tower to be moved away from our schools and daycares. Opponents currently include over 800 residents (including members of the Church's congregation!), who have signed the petition, our local ratepayers association, our local Councillor Paul Ainslie and, most recently, our City Council, which has fully supported and passed our Notice of Motion to the Federal Government objecting the placement of this cell tower on Church property.

We have repeatedly asked the Church to recognise our concerns and sit down with us to resolve the problem. The Church has refused and, contrary to what you may have read, has never asked us to meet with them. We have even offered our wholehearted support in their renegotiations with Bell Mobility. Unfortunately, the Church has shown strong reluctance even to listen to our pleas, and tells us and the local media that they have satisfied themselves "that this cell tower will pose no risks". It steadfastly refuses to cancel its financial contract with Bell Mobility, arguing that it wants the money so that it can fund its national and international outreach programs. This is indeed a noble cause to which nobody can reasonably object. However, we do not believe that the Church has the right to pursue such goals when success is achieved by jeopardising the health and well being of its neighbours and children attending local schools.

Our Concerns

Our objections to the proposed cell tower are many and varied. Some will affect only residents and school children living and working within 500 to 1000 metres of the proposed site; others will affect the whole Village Community. Our concerns include:

- Health Risks

The documented effects these towers have on health are a primary concern, especially given that the tower's proposed location is less than 220 metres from 3 schools (Guildwood Jr. P.S., St. Ursula and Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and 2 daycare facilities, and 350 metres from 2 senior citizen residences. Although federal guidelines exist for exposure to radiofrequency radiation (RFR), they are based on short-term thermal effects for healthy adults (trained to work near

RFR) and assume that energy which does not heat tissue is not harmful. This assumption is incorrect. Adverse biological effects have been documented at levels well below federal exposure guidelines and there are no federal guidelines for non-thermal effects; nor are there guidelines for long-term exposure and cumulative effects (a particular concern in the Toronto area). Adverse biological effects include altered white blood cells in school children; childhood leukemia; impaired motor function, reaction time, and memory; also, headaches, dizziness, fatigue, weakness, and insomnia. Toronto's Medical Officer of Health notes that "the World Health Organization and other countries acknowledge that biological effects are evident below the international guidelines". Similarly, the Royal Society of Canada acknowledges evidence of biological effects and has recommended that the significance of such effects be clarified before they are included in Health Canada's Safety Code 6 (which has not been revised since 1999 despite new research).

In 2005, the Vancouver School Board banned cellular towers from within 1000 feet (305m) of school property citing health concerns. Toronto's Medical Officer of Health recognises that "there are many scientific uncertainties around the possible health impacts from RFs (Radio Frequencies)" and has recommended adoption of "a prudent approach that keeps RF exposure of the public to a minimum wherever possible". The World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe & EEA has stated "RF exposure may be more hazardous for the fetus and child due to their greater susceptibility [and] prudent avoidance is one approach to keeping children's exposure as low as possible". The "prudent approach" has a parallel in the "no regrets policy".

More recently, and as part of the "Notice of Motion" filed on behalf of Guildwood residents opposed to the cell tower, the City of Toronto has refused to recognise Safety Code 6 until the concerns raised by the Toronto Board of Health are addressed. The Medical Officer of Health and Toronto Board of Health highlight numerous safety concerns. The City of Toronto has also asked for a policy to be adopted that prohibits cell towers/antenna from within 500 metres of highly populated areas. How can the Church seriously suggest that it has satisfied itself with respect to safety issues when the City's own Medical Officer of Health has serious concerns?

- **Decreased Property Values**

Property values will typically decrease by between 3 and 21% for houses within 500 metres of a cell tower. While this is partly explained by the internationally held stigma associated with living under the glare of a cell tower, it is also due to a drop in the pool of potential buyers, especially from families with infants and school aged children.

- **Negative Environmental Impacts**

The whole Guildwood Community will suffer the environmental impacts, and most obvious will be the southerly view from the top of the Lake Iroquois Bluff near the Guildwood Gates. A 115' cell tower will dominate the skyline with a presence that dwarfs neighbouring homes. It will be twice the height of our tallest trees (60-70feet) and three to four times the height of our forested canopy. Currently we enjoy spectacular, unobstructed views of the forested canopy, a canopy so dense that it all but obscures the houses and shops of the village. Having a cell tower protrude 60' above the canopy and in the centre of the village will scar the panoramic landscape forever. Surely our current scenic view represents a natural resource that needs to be protected?

Less obvious for most, but just as important, is the ecological footprint that the tower will impart. Guildwood's urban forest supports many migratory birds including winter wrens, a variety of warblers and birds of prey that stop over in our forest to rest and lay their eggs. Our Carolinian forest is a critical habitat for these threatened birds and it is essential that their breeding grounds are protected.

The Federal Government of Canada acknowledges that millions of birds die each year because they collide with towers/antennas. In fact, cell towers/antenna represent the 6th main cause of bird death – in Toronto this would be the 5th main cause since the city has sensibly banned the use of pesticides which was a primary cause of death. Moreover, several peer reviewed scientific studies have found ill effects caused to birds by radiofrequency radiation. In particular, this includes a significantly lower success rate when it comes to nesting, breeding and hatching. Toronto's Medical Officer of Health's 2007 report documents similar concerns. It describes a European study in which the "mean density of sparrow populations declined significantly over a 4-year period and a strong relation was observed between lower bird density and areas where the RF field strength was higher". The same 2007 report goes on to say that in studies of cows living near RF antennas, spontaneous abortion rates decreased and milk production increased and returned to normal levels when the cows were moved 20km away from the antennas. It is interesting to note that the link between reduced fertility and cell towers is not limited to birds but is seen across different animal species including mice, cows and humans.

- Historical Impact

Finally, there is the historical impact. The Guildwood lakefront community has a proud history, and the siting of a communications tower at the proposed location represents a serious affront to all who have worked so hard to develop the community's unique character. Guildwood village is one of the few villages in Toronto that was purposely planned by one of the greatest urban designers Dr. Faludi who worked closely with Spencer Clark to ensure that Guildwood's Carolinian Forest was protected as part of the subdivision plan. Both men recognised the importance of preserving the forest and even tunnelled around trees to hide wires for lamp posts, thereby ensuring nothing would detract from the trees and the canopy. Erecting a 115' tower in the centre of the village is not only contrary to the vision of the village forefathers, but is an insult to their great work and the legacy that has been left in our care. As a Community, can we seriously accept a 115' tower in the centre of our village, overlooking the Guild Inn with its historic artefacts and buildings? Never in Spencer Clark's worst nightmares would he have dreamed that his precious lands would one day have an ugly and environmentally damaging cell phone tower as its centerpiece.

The Solution

We all know the solution. The real question is how best this can be achieved. If necessary, we are prepared for a long arduous challenge, but would prefer to solve the problem through open communication and trust. Surely this would be better for the future of our community. We appeal to both Bell Mobility and the Church.....

To Bell Mobility..... Please reconsider!

Piercing our landscape with more and more cell towers/antennas is simply unnecessary. Pre-existing cell antennas located unobtrusively 500 metres immediately south of the Church site (and

400 metres away from the nearest daycare and school), provide good coverage to a good portion of the community subscribing to competitors' mobile phones. Why doesn't Bell Mobility heed the advice of the Federal Agencies who promote sharing of infrastructure between the various companies? Indeed, as of January 1st, 2008, Industry Canada mandates sharing, where feasible, as a condition of licence. Sharing the existing infrastructure will ensure:

- That the Toronto Medical Officer of Health's recommendations are followed in that exposure is kept to a minimum and at a more acceptable distance from the schools and daycares. It will also take into account the issue of cumulative effects to ensure that radiofrequency radiation be reduced around the most sensitive populations (infants, children and seniors) and the general public.
- Will reduce the negative environmental, ecological and historical impacts of having a tower as the village centrepiece whilst affording protection to our wildlife and scenic resources.
- That residents within our community who use cell phones will all enjoy the same level of reception. Everyone in attendance at the December 4th Bell Mobility meeting knows that the coverage for the proposed cell tower is limited and is classed only as "good" for those houses in the immediate vicinity (400m radius) of the tower and simply "average" for customers between 400m and 800m away.

To the Church..... Please reconsider!

Please do not gamble with our lives. The vast majority of medical and scientific experts, including WHO, agree that further research is needed. Please do not divide the community and cause irreversible damage to Guildwood's unique ecological, historical and scenic treasures. With the strong support of Toronto City Council and our neighbours in the community, we intend to pursue our cause through all available channels, beginning with the Federal Agencies. However, this dispute doesn't have to end in such an acrimonious way. Please talk to us. Only the Presbyterian Church can fully guarantee that the cell tower is stopped and, should you choose to take this step, we are ready to work with you in the true community spirit of Guildwood Village. For all concerned, today and in the future, we truly hope that you take this step and that harmony can be restored.

This article was prepared by K. Gelo, on behalf and with the assistance of members of the Guildwood No Tower Group.

If you would like further information or want to find out how you can help stop the cell tower please contact us at <http://www.guildwoodnotower.ca> or guildwoodnotower@rogers.com

We strongly urge anyone wanting to stop this cell tower to express your concerns to all agencies:

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