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# Time to lay down the law on damaged telecom boxes: The Fixer

With so many boxes broken and falling apart, and no urgency to fix them, maybe the telecom providers need some rules.



A damaged communications equipment box on Warden Ave., just south of Boem Ave., has been swallowed by an infestation of deadly nightshade, a poisonous weed. There are no rules requiring telecom providers to keep the boxes in a state of good repair. (JACK LAKEY FOR THE TORONTO STAR)

By **JACK LAKEY** The Fixer

Sat., Oct. 7, 2017

Question: When will telecom providers start making speedy repairs to the many damaged equipment boxes on city streets?

Answer: Not until there are rules to make them do it.

The endless number of damaged telecom boxes that we see and are reported to us by readers is wearying.

The wiring and equipment spilling from damaged boxes seems impervious to weather and the ravages of street life, which may be among the reasons that so many are left unrepaired for months or even years.

They're also a bee in the bonnet of many readers, including James Barrett, who sent us photos of four damaged equipment boxes he saw on a stroll along the west side of Warden Ave., between Ellesmere Rd. and Lawrence Ave.

A crumbling box he found [near Boem Ave.](#) not only sprouts a large metal cylinder from its innards, but also hosts an infestation of poisonous deadly nightshade that has almost overwhelmed it.

The bottom line is far too many look like trash, and if the telecom providers responsible are genuinely interested in maintaining them, they're doing a helluva job of keeping it under their hats.

Which brings us to rules, or a lack of them. We raised the issue recently with city [Councillor Paul Ainslie](#) (Ward 43, Scarborough East), asking if the city could impose standards requiring damaged boxes to be fixed right away.

[Ainslie](#) noted that federal legislation governs telecom companies and allows them almost total access to city streets and the space beneath them, which is why they can dig up a newly paved road to make underground repairs.

He doesn't think the city has authority to impose maintenance standards for boxes, but added he's no expert on the subject.

Maybe it's time to give it a try. The boxes are becoming a pox and their owners show little interest in addressing the problem.

City council could start small, with a bylaw requiring every box to be clearly labelled with the name of the owner — Bell's are easier to spot than Rogers', but both have many with no markings — along with a phone number that can be called to report damage.

If they beef it, claiming the city has no jurisdiction, perhaps they'll end up on the high side of the legal argument. But in that case, they would be showing they'd rather fight for anonymous boxes with no identifying markings, instead of keeping them in good repair.

It would also demonstrate a distinct lack of shame.

*What's broken in your neighbourhood? Wherever you are in Greater Toronto, we want to know. Send an email to [jlakey@thestar.ca](mailto:jlakey@thestar.ca). Report problems and follow us on Twitter @TOStarFixer.*

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