

Signal tower won't be eyesore, Bell vows

Structure planned atop Guildwood church to resemble a flagpole

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Like it or not, people who live near Guildwood Community Presbyterian Church are likely to be stuck with a Bell Canada communications tower to be built on church property.

But Bell says the tower won't be an eyesore and will look no different than a typical flagpole, except somewhat taller.

On Monday, we reported on a protest outside the church, before and after Sunday services, by neighbours who recently learned of the church's deal with Bell last April to allow a 37-metre signal tower to be built on its property, at Livingston Rd. and Guildwood Parkway.

They were angry the community wasn't consulted or even notified until six months after Bell and the church came to an agreement, and worried about possible health effects from cellphone signaling equipment in a residential area and its impact on property values.

Paul Ainslie, the local city councilor, said a court ruling last March 2 determined that telecommunications installations are governed by Industry Canada, a federal agency, and are not subject to the city's site plan process, meaning cellphone carriers don't need city approval to erect towers.

"The federal authority trumps anything we can do to limit the places where they're built," said Ainslie (Ward 41, Scarborough-Rouge River), who complained about lack of consultation in a letter to local MP John McKay and asked Bell to organize a community information meeting.

Trish Millar-Ellis, the church's clerk of sessions, who handles its business affairs, refused to comment yesterday.

Jason Laszlo, who deals with media for Bell, said the tower won't look anything like the typical signaling equipment, bristling with antennae. He emailed us a photo of a tower he says is just like the one planned for the church, which doesn't seem to stand out from its surroundings.

But that's not likely to comfort neighbours who don't like the way the deal was done.

The community meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. Tuesday at the church, where officials from Bell, the church and the city will be on hand.

* The Error was made in the article, Councillor Paul Ainslie is a Councillor in Ward 43 Scarborough East, no as printed Ward 41.