

## **Pickering cell tower on hold**

May 24, 2011

Kristen Calis

PICKERING -- The federal government has put a hold on a Rogers cellphone tower that's under construction next to a Pickering church.

In April, the City of Pickering sent a letter to Minister of Industry Tony Clement, asking that the ministry, which oversees the installation of cell towers, put a halt on the tower going up at Amberlea Presbyterian Church at Whites Road and Strouds Lane, and that it look into moving it to a more suitable location.

According to current legislation, towers that are less than 15 metres in height do not require consultation with municipalities or residents. The tower set to go up at the church will be just under, at 14.9 metres.

Industry Canada has ordered the work on the site to cease until it can review the matter.

Although pleased with the response, council didn't stop at the Amberlea tower. On May 16 council passed another motion asking the government cease further consideration of communication towers in any residential area of Pickering in order to hold discussions with the City to establish criteria for their installation.

Residents in other parts of Pickering have come forward, also complaining about cell towers that have sprouted up across the municipality.

Richard Silveira and his family live in the area of Liverpool Road and Finch Avenue and he was surprised to wake up and see a tower just outside of his backyard recently.

"It's very close to the residential area," he said.

Stephen D'Agostino, representing Rogers Wireless, said now that more and more people use cellphones for everything from telephone calls to Internet applications, more of the infrastructure will be required.

"It's important to know the issue with wireless today is not for waste," he said.

He pointed out that although communications companies are not required to consult residents, Rogers still held a meeting with residents backing onto the church, in this case in early December.

"The meeting was held and 30 members of the public came out to talk about the site," he said.

He argued that a Rogers representative did call the City's planning department, but Ward 1 Regional Councillor Jennifer O'Connell pointed out there was no record of a call.

Mr. D'Agostino provided information from Health Canada that said the technology is unlikely to cause health effects in order to address some resident concerns. Ward 3 Regional Councillor Peter Rodrigues said he's uncomfortable with the word "unlikely."

Coun. O'Connell said she believes the industry will be forced to change, which will be caused by public pressure.

"In the meantime we have to find a more appropriate location in the Amberlea neighbourhood," she said.

Mr. Silveira said in a phone interview the next day he was pleased with the motion's passing and hopes the government will entertain it, giving other residents a chance to review tower plans for their neighbourhood before they go up.