March 29, 2014

The Director, Spectrum Management Operations
Industry Canada
235 Queen Street,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0H5

Delivered by email to: spectrum.operations@ic.gc.ca

Re: Notice No. DGSO-001-14 — Consultation on Amendments to Industry Canada’s Antenna Tower Siting Procedures, Posted on Industry Canada website: February 27, 2014

Dear Sir/Madame,

We, the aggrieved citizens of Sutton Junction, Quebec, applaud the initiative you are undertaking to make Antenna Tower Siting a more transparent, consultative and balanced process.

Our rustic and beautiful village has been under attack by the agents of Bell Mobility for almost ten months. Our community has had to rally to overcome the wholly unjustified siting of an inappropriate cell tower that will clearly destroy the beauty of this part of Canada’s Eastern Townships while eroding the value of what are collectively our most significant capital assets, our homes, and very likely exposing the elderly and the young to potentially damaging health concerns.

The citizens of Sutton Junction, Quebec, have been fighting for justice in regards to a Bell Mobility cell tower that started construction on, or about, September 20th, 2013. On October 3, 2013, the Sutton Town Council passed a unanimous resolution stopping construction on the Sutton Junction cell tower after the citizens became aware of the project and submitted a petition to Bell Mobility of 100 plus signatures.

The imposition of this monstrosity was thrust upon us unannounced, with no proper notice and no community information sessions or involvement. Instead, we awoke to find ourselves the victims of backroom dealings that apparently resulted from the strong-armed tactics of a powerful, well resourced, oligopolistic bent on taking advantage of the tremendous tactical advantage they hold over small communities such as ours.

Since May 21, 2013 Bell Mobility have refused to openly reverse their decision to place a cell tower in a populated small rural area. Sutton Junction is surrounded by mountains and many other more appropriate sites can be found. As of March 29, 2014 the daily threat of a damaging cell tower, from a health and financial point of view, continues to be held over the heads of Sutton Junction citizens.

We have banded together and, in concert with local elected officials, are trying our best to at least achieve an open and balanced dialogue. But it has been a hard process. For Bell this is just a routine exploitation of an unarmed community while for us this is something of potentially drastic consequence. Yet the odds are seemingly stacked in Bell’s favour.
Any time we protest the lack of notification or community involvement we experience surreptitious efforts to retroactively re-right the written record and get spurious bills for lost economic advantage thrust in our faces when we dare to suggest more appropriate locations.

From a technical perspective, it has been asserted that only those whose property lies within the tight confines of an area defined as a circle with a radius of three times the height of the tower (here 180 feet) deserve notification and consultation. Perhaps where there are small, disguised towers such an approach might be warranted, but it seems a grossly inadequate way to define inclusion when we are discussing the erection of an 18 storey edifice in the midst of a small, bucolic village nestled in a gully surrounded by rolling hills and mountains. It is ludicrous to suggest that the character of the entire village is not being damaged. We would encourage adoption of more appropriate notification and consultation standards that instead reflect the reality of each situation and provide for a more appropriately inclusive, just and transparent process.

No one has actually explained the need for all this. No one has presented a coherent argument for discussion on the merits of this proposed tower. The apparent attitude of the representative of Bell Mobility is that if the Sutton Town Council refuses the current location then it, the tower, will be forced upon them. It is our understanding that elected officials are simply told that they have no option and that the government will support whatever Bell wants. Surely this is not right. Surely this sort of thing should not happen to Canadians in their own country.

So that other communities throughout this great country do not have to endure any similar exploitative onslaughts, we urge you to make the siting of these towers a fairer and more balanced process. Communities deserve the right to know why such destruction must be wrought upon them. Surely the Goliaths of this world should have to justify to those they wish to trample upon before they do so, particularly as it is done – they claim – in the name of Industry Canada.

So we applaud your initiative to introduce greater accountability and transparency in the "Antenna Tower Siting Procedures".

We would also beseech you to help us break the stranglehold that is upon the very throats of our innocent village. Over 75% of local residents now support our movement. Any help you can render in balancing the equation and righting this wrong would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Barker
Sutton Citizens Movement
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