H.H. Towers Meet With Opposition

By Barry Hendry

At the March 6 session of the Hastings Highlands Council two residents presented their case for improving cell and Internet coverage, while about 26 opponents of one tower location watched before they presented their suggestions.

Jerome Leveque and Shawn Hickey addressed council.

Leveque said, “I have a petition signed by 200 people. I think it’s needed. I have no cell or Internet service at my house. Graphite Road and parts of Robinson Road have little coverage. I think those who signed the other petition already have service. We need it for students, for our fire department, EMS and police and for home businesses.”

Hickey added, “Many already have service, but I don’t. I live on the east side of Salmon Trout Lake and a land line is not an option for me. I have to drive to the fire hall (on Musclow Greenview Road) to call 9-1-1, and that’s not acceptable.

“Having more coverage will help economic development and bring me piece of mind. Many on my lake drive out, twice a day, to get their messages so they can do their work. I need it for my work. We know the cost of fibre optic makes it unrealistic and impossible in some locations. I’ve worked in Haiti and Guyana where they have good cell coverage, but not in Bird’s Creek.”

Diane Thompson, Keith Buck and Alex Walter were back for a second presentation on the possible location on the west side of Musclow Greenvies Road just north of Salmon Trout Lake Road. They also brought two motions they hoped council would pass as, on was an amendment to its resolution of February 20.

Thompson repeated her statement that she and others support better service, but she added she would like to see the tower west of her house to be moved farther west away from houses.

“I hope that council would refrain from expressing its support of Protocol CPC-20-03,” Thompson said. “If you reject our motion, you’ll accept CanACRE’s resolution without research and be prematurely supporting the proponent (Bell Mobility).  
“The EORN (Eastern Ontario Regional Network) or its (contracted) entrepreneurs are expanding (Cell/Internet) service, but you’re only getting guidance from one source. We told staff and council to have our best interests at heart. We urge you to accept our amendment and only give concurrence (to the project) after a review.” Keith Buck said, “The EORN said the date of arrival of fibre optic service in Monteagle and Bancroft is the fall of 2013. So there are options coming.” Alex Walter said, “Hastings Highlands and the other townships have put millions into EORN and to abandon it now would be a serious blow.”

Chief Administrative Officer Craig Davidson responded, “EORN is working with Bell Alliant which has made the most significant investment. They have the same mandate of 95 per cent coverage using fibre optic, satellite or line of sight with towers. They use private contractors.”

Walter said, “The proposed tower is very close to homes, so moving it 300 to 35- metres is not unreasonable.” Later, then council was asked by Mayor Vivian Bloom for the required two thirds majority vote to reconsider its February 20 Resolution 079-2013 that made it part of the project and gave it some oversight of the process, not one member was in favour. Therefore the amendment from the residents could not be discussed or voted on.

The amendment motion asked council to designate a council member, not the Chief Building Official, to sign off that the protocol had been followed. That would bring the matter to open council.  
In a second suggested motion requested by the residents was not passed. It requested council encourage public input with an information meeting organize by constituents within two week. That meeting would include residents, council and Bell Mobility and CanACRE and the public would prepare a report to council on the meeting.  
Councillor Lorraine Fell concluded the dialogue by proposing a motion based on a new protocol because companies can erect towers or antennae that are just shy of the 15 meter height, mostly in urban areas. This avoids the public consultation process under the Industry Canada Protocol CPC 2-0-03 which requires a public process for towers of 15 meters height or higher.

Her motion was, “that the municipality request CanACRE/Bell to honour the new protocol for the placement of wireless antenna systems, to create better understanding and cooperation between CanACRE/Bell and our community and that this motion be forwarded to CanACRE/Bell, asking for the favour of a response.”