

# WV wireless policy sparks more debate

## Residents split over health issues VS demand

BY SAM SMITH, NORTH SHORE NEWS    MARCH 3, 2013

MORE than most residents of the Lower Mainland, West Vancouverites can't wait to use the latest wireless gadgets, but they have some of the poorest service in the Lower Mainland.

That's according to company officials from Telus and Rogers, who want the District of West Vancouver to consider more cell towers in the area.

The company officials were on hand Monday as council members met to discuss the latest draft to the district's wireless communication facilities policy. The policy impacts where cell phone companies can place new towers in West Vancouver. While Industry Canada regulates where cell phone towers can be installed, Rogers and Telus both tend to adhere to local municipal wishes.

Cindy Grauer of Rogers Communications told council since the techno-boom of the iPad, smart phones and tablets, Rogers and Telus have had trouble in West Vancouver keeping up with demand.

"People are using tons of bandwidth, and they're demanding high-speed, high-bandwidth connections," Grauer said.

Brian Greg of Telus agreed. "Consumers want high-speed, high-bandwidth mobile connectivity twenty-four seven," he said. "West Van residents especially. We've been receiving lots of complaints from West Vancouver about poor service like lost calls."

Telus wants to install more cell phone towers around the district.

However, some residents are opposing the idea. "We must always consider the health impacts from cell phone towers," said Liz Walker, director of Citizens for Safe Technology during her presentation.

Walker said the long-term consequences of the electromagnetic radiation emitted from certain electronic devices, such as Wi-Fi routers, smart meters and cell phone towers aren't known. Walker's group wants council to reduce the number of cell phone towers so no residence is within 500 meters of a tower. Coun. Nora Gambioli agreed with Walker and said the new policy needs to reflect health concerns. "What I see in letters all the time is people are opposed to the cell towers for health reasons," she said.

However, Coun. Trish Panz felt it was a very small percentage of people who actually worried about cell phone radiation.

"From what I've seen, it's far outweighed by citizens demanding a better service," she said.

In the presentation to council, Telus and Rogers Communications listed four possible ways to integrate cell phone towers into the district. Those include installing them on rooftops, but in an aesthetically pleasing and unobtrusive way, and putting them on smaller poles, less than 15 metres tall. The third option is a large tower. The fourth option would be to include the towers on infrastructure, such as a light post.

Councillors Mary-Ann Booth, Craig Cameron and Michael Lewis said there should be clarification on exactly where the towers would be installed on a map before any decisions could be made.

An updated report is expected in the next two months.

[editor@nsnews.com](mailto:editor@nsnews.com)

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