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## City eyes limits for cell towers

**NICOLE MACINTYRE**

The Hamilton Spectator

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Hamilton is working to develop its own protocol for new cellphone towers but admits that, at the end of the day, the city will have no say over locations.

There has been growing outrage across Canada as demand for better coverage has pushed cell towers deeper into neighbourhoods.

Hamilton has seen its own battles on the Mountain and in Ancaster. Each time, residents have learned there's little the city can do to stop the technology.

Industry Canada has the ultimate authority on the location of towers, but municipalities are encouraged to develop their own protocols to promote preferred locations, city planner Heather Travis told councillors yesterday.

Hamilton is proposing to discourage companies from locating towers within 150 metres of residential neighbourhoods and schools. If they decide to locate within the zones, companies would have to jump through extra hoops, including public consultation.

"We're trying to make it easier for them to locate in industrial and commercial areas," Travis said.

But Councillor Brad Clark noted there is little value in public consultation if the feedback doesn't ultimately impact the decision.

"It almost becomes meaningless in the end."

Travis said Industry Canada will ask companies and residents to try to mediate their concerns, but will make the final decision.

Councillor Lloyd Ferguson asked staff to report back on expanding the discouraged area to 400 metres. He also wants the city to re-examine its refusal to allow its water towers to be used as cell towers.

Lawyer Stephen D'Agostino, who represents Bell Mobility, Rogers Wireless and Telus Mobility, cautioned against expanding the discouraged area. He said companies will want to pick the best engineering location but might compromise if it means a faster decision. The city would take away that incentive if it made the limited area too large, he said.

"If it's going to be a fight anyway, engineers will want to go to the best position."

He added demand for cell towers within neighbourhoods will only increase as more customers use cellphones in their homes and companies adopt wireless Internet.

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