



# TROUT LAKE CAMPERS ASSOCIATION – SUDBURY DISTRICT, ONTARIO, ESTABLISHED 1955

PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL  
MUNICIPALITY OF FRENCH RIVER  
NOVEMBER 20, 2013

The Trout Lake Campers Association-Sudbury District represents 220 members and their families, and over 85% of the Trout Lake property owners belong to the Association.

There is currently a proposal being put forward by Blue Sky Net and Spectrum Group to erect a communications tower on the south shore of Trout Lake (Alban area). The Association opposes the proposed communication tower location, which is to be erected close to the lake shore on a private cottage lot. The 96 foot tower would be visible above the tree line from the lake. The Association has been attempting to work with the proponents by suggesting alternative locations where the tower would have less impact and perhaps could even provide more potential customers with coverage. However, our efforts to date have been unsuccessful.

We are objecting to **the location** of the proposed tower for the following reasons:

Coverage: The entire Trout lake area is well served by Internet providers Xplornet, Bell and Rogers, shown on Appendix a) and b). Xplornet beams the signal by satellite which reaches every property on the lake. Bell and Rogers signals reach most of properties except a dozen or so properties which are located in terrain “pockets”. These properties will not receive any signal unless the tower is very close. Only a few years back neither Bell nor Rogers signal was available, however by boosting the signals from an existing and a new tower away from the lake, both Bell and Rogers managed to extend the service into most previously unserved areas on the lake. Quite a few residents purchase a “bundle” of services such as telephone land line, cell phone, TV and internet which provide a discount on the services. Spectrum Group also has transmitters on the towers in Noelville and Alban and, according to their coverage map the signal from those towers reaches some parts of the lake. Therefore by boosting their signal they could extend their service to cover the entire lake, without an additional tower.

One of Industry Canada’s conditions of erecting new tower is the proof that there is no other alternative to bring the internet service to the area. We have seen no such justification from Spectrum Group. In addition, there are presently widespread concerns about why so many towers have been erected all over the

land. In light of the above, one has to wonder why Spectrum Group is so strongly intent on erecting the tower at proposed location.

Price of Service: When individual preferences, amount of data and speed of data upload and download are taken into account, there is very little difference in prices among Bell, Rogers and Spectrum Group. Spectrum Group does provide unlimited internet but once the “slowest” package is not adequate, their price goes considerably higher. Most average clients use between 3-6 GB per month and Bell does have a “stepped” flex plan that charges the price based on amount of data usage. Rogers have a similar plan, however, once the maximum GBs are reached, it does charge \$15 per extra GB as compared to \$10 per GB by Bell. A large number of users have subscribed to bundled set of services in order to receive a discounted price. In light of all of this any new provider on the lake will have hard time getting customers to switch from the current providers, which in turn poses the question, “Why would Spectrum Group want to enter such a competitive market?”

Natural Vistas: This is a major concern of the majority Trout Lake property owners who have chosen to live or have camps on the lake precisely for its tranquility, natural beauty and high water quality. Industry Canada, among other valid concerns that tower proponents are to address, states:

“Why is the use of an existing antenna system or structure not possible?”

“Why is an alternate site not possible?” and

“How is the proponent trying to integrate the antenna into the local surroundings?” See Appendix D for Industry Canada requirements.

From the simulated picture of the proposed tower superimposed on the skyline at the proposed location, (Appendix C), it clearly demonstrates that the tower will not integrate into the surroundings and will stick out “like a sore thumb” into the sky. It important to note that Spectrum Group has provided few pictures of different towers but none of these pictures are taken from the water and therefore are not relevant to the compatibility of the tower to the surrounding area. They have also indicated they are not prepared to erect a “pine tree” style tower such as are used in the Muskoka area.

Alternate Sites: In an effort to accommodate Spectrum Group’s intent to provide service and address concerns of Trout Lake property owners TLCASD has provided a list of sites on Cherriman road that would meet both objectives. After meeting with Spectrum Group and Blue Sky Net representatives we were optimistic that this was a positive approach and a win-win situation for all. Once we received the copy of “Trout Lake Tower Feasibility Study” from Spectrum Group, it became obvious that Spectrum Group was not willing to change an iota from their original proposal and were simply going through the motions of appearing that they were seriously considering alternatives.

Initially, all of their discussions are concentrated on the “budgeted” amount, which ONLY includes the cost of their proposal. This clearly indicates that they never entertained and studied other alternative sites prior to discussions with TLCASD.

Some of the statements in the study of alternative sites seem to defy logic such as needing different hydro poles for transformers. All transformers are attached to standard poles, there is no such thing as “heavy duty” poles for transformers. In a worst case scenario guy wires are commonly used to make sure the pole is not under stress which actually comes from change in direction of the power line.

It is very significant that Blue Sky Net did not provide their actual computer generated coverage maps, which they presented at the meeting, which would clearly show the projected coverage area. Instead, they chose to interpret the number of properties expected to receive the signal, and therefore there was no way to verify their interpretation.

At the meeting of Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> we were shown two maps of coverage, one for their proposed site and the other for our first proposed site at our fish rearing pond located 1,900 ft. (550 m) from the lakeshore. It was remarkable that the coverage was virtually the same, and this was admitted by Mr. Jeff Buel who did the modelling. This definitely disputed Spectrum Group’s statement that the tower must be at the shoreline to provide better coverage. It is also worth noting that the coverage map indicated that service would be available to the properties at the east end of the lake some 8.5 km away. Pioneer Domain is less than 2.5 km away from TLCASD sites and there are no hills in between the sites.

This leads us to the conclusion that Pioneer Domain can be served by 96 ft. tower from the proposed TLCASD sites. Just to note that TLCASD has asked Blue Sky Net for the maps of coverage presented at the meeting, but these requests were ignored. In addition, in her email Ms. Church indicated that “consultations” were over and that no communication to anybody other than Mr. Sebastien will be given. Therefore what we expected to be a cooperative effort was stopped by Spectrum Group and Blue Sky Net.

Conclusions and Recommendation: The following conclusions can be reached after considering the Spectrum Group and Blue Sky net information:

1. The evidence suggests that there was never any serious consideration of alternatives such as boosting the signal from existing towers and sharing the towers of other providers by these companies.
2. In light of the extensive coverage of Trout Lake area by Xplornet, Bell and Rogers one would not expect additional single service to be competitive and manage to get enough subscribers to make the project viable.

3. Spectrum Group and Blue Sky Net certainly did not meet Industry Canada criteria to make the tower compatible with its surroundings. In that regard it appears that, among the few pictures they provided, not a single one was taken from the water which would show the true impact on the lake vista.
4. In addressing our proposal for alternative sites Spectrum Group and Blue Sky Net used every possible reason in order to turn them down. At the meeting they emphasized “they were running out of time and a deadline to use the government grant”, and also “budget” that cannot be changed. In their Feasibility Study they presented coverage of number of properties. This number is not a true measure of probable customers, the true number is how many people will decide to switch from their present provider. The most disturbing aspect of this is that they did not supply actual modeled coverage maps so none of their numbers or actual coverage can be verified.

We still believe that 55 inhabitants of Pioneer Domain stood a very good chance of getting the internet signal from proposed TLCASD sites. We also believe that the Industry Canada grants are primarily intended to bring broadband internet to people without any service rather than already heavily serviced areas. Finally, we believe that Spectrum Group and Blue Sky Net never intended to accept alternative sites but went through the motions in order to please MFR Council. We also want to repeat that TLCASD is not against the tower but the location of it.

5. All of the above seems to point out that the primary reason for installation of this tower is to supply free internet to the Executive Director of Blue Sky Net and the relatives on whose property the tower would be located. It would be grossly unfair to Trout Lake property owners if this was allowed to happen.
6. **We recommend that MFR Council delay a decision on this tower location until regulations are developed through the Zoning By-Law which is currently under review, or other planning instruments which will then apply to the entire Municipality of French River.** This way many more citizens will have input into making those regulations and further disputes about these towers will be reduced to a minimum.

Submitted on behalf of TLCASD Board of Directors,

Slobodan ( Bob ) Nikolic, President

Linda Lachance, Secretary