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Rogers cell tower fiasco draws RCMP to angry homeowners & community protest in BC

Salt Spring Island, BC

Today RCMP broke up an outraged homeowners & community protest blockading a Rogers cell tower construction site access on Salt Spring Island BC. Protesters were told by the RCMP that they would be arrested & face criminal charges if they continued the blockade.

The group of protesters accuse Rogers of making incorrect & misleading statements regarding a cell tower application to the local government authority, Salt Spring Island Local Trust Committee. Rogers has also ignored the official community plan for an environmentally sensitive area & are breaking an existing site covenant that does not allow development. Rogers is negligent by not observing First Nations heritage conservation on the site, according to the protesting group. Community pressure to relocate the tower away from an established neighbourhood has been completely dismissed by Rogers.

Rogers refused to meet in person with the Salt Spring community, as requested by the Local Trust Committee. Instead Rogers conducted a Zoom call, inviting over 230 interested parties. In the invitation to the Zoom call, Rogers violated the Personal Information Protection Act of BC by releasing all personal email addresses to the public. Michael Krentz, representative of Rogers, said “Yeah, we know we did a faux pas there on the carbon copy of everybody”. Islanders have responded asking how can they trust the mega corporation with anything when they can’t even respect BC laws.

Protesters are disappointed that Salt Spring Islands Local Trust Committee has been ineffective in holding Rogers to account. The Trust overturned their original approval of the cell tower in March after

residents repeatedly showed that Rogers application contained false & incomplete information. Later when the federal regulator questioned the Trusts decision to overturn, the Trust didn't respond to them. This allowed Rogers to say the overturn was invalid.

The protest group believes this project holds far greater significance for Salt Spring Island's future. "If Rogers can make false assertions, break existing covenants, & ignore First Nations heritage, yet still be allowed to proceed, will this be the new norm for all island projects? Will McDonalds be the next corporation to come to Salt Spring? Is there no accountability from the Trust?"

Protest spokesperson, Julian Clark, said "The telecom giant, Rogers Communications, knows that 75% of our community disapproves of a tower on this site. They have repeatedly bypassed proper protocols in applying for this tower location. Rogers is taking no interest in what people think & are indifferent to decision making by our Local Islands Trust. We are mothers, fathers & grandparents who are in favour of better emergency systems & increased cellular/wireless services, but our homes are the most affected by the proximity of this tower.

The issues speak for themselves. We are a quiet, peaceful community & the last thing we expected was to have to protest against a megacorporation. To be honest, none of us want to be here, but we have no options. We have never held a picket sign or protested anything in our lives. But we refuse to be bullied by big business & the heavy handedness of Rogers. And now they want to arrest us for this".

Protests are expected to continue until Rogers comply with the issues raised by this group.
