

Class-action suit claims Bell Fibe service misleads customers



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ADVERTISE

VIDEO





In many cases, to receive Fibe TV from Bell, the fibre optic wiring is sent to what's called a neighbourhood node, and then connected to homes through old-fashioned copper phone wires for the last kilometre or so.

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Bell's Fibe service is misleading customers because of claims the service delivers a fibre optic network to homes, a new lawsuit claims.



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Quebec's Superior Court authorized a class-action lawsuit Thursday against the company for falsely advertising its Fibe television and Internet service.

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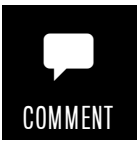
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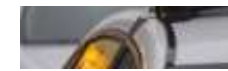
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Bell Fibe is an Internet-delivered television service that uses Bell's fibre optic internet network. However, in many cases, the fibre optic wiring is sent to what's called a neighbourhood node, and then connected to homes through old-fashioned copper phone wires for the last kilometre or so.

A brief submitted to the court highlighted several promotional advertisements including a brochure from 2012, that said the network is



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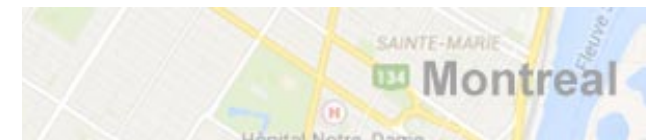
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“made up of 100 per cent fibre optic connected directly to each home.” Bell writes in small print on the brochure that the fibre wires are available only where technology permits.

In a 2015 interview, however, Shawn Omstead, vice-president of residential products who manages Fibe, told Postmedia the Fibe experience the consumer receives doesn’t differ whether the cable is directly connected to the home, or through a phone wire from a neighbourhood node.

“I don’t think, at the end of the day, a customer cares how it gets delivered,” he said. “If I have Fibe on FTTH (fibre to the home) or FTTN (fibre to the node), in terms of the way (customers) watch, there’s nothing that we differentiate in the service. We haven’t felt the need to talk about that difference.”

Côte-St-Luc resident Shay Abicidan, however, disagrees. Named as the first plaintiff in the class-action suit, he said he started the action because he wants Bell to pay for lying to customers.

“To put it short, I was misled, along with a few hundred thousand customers,” Abicidan said. “I didn’t get what I was promised.”

He said he thought Bell was providing a service of fibre optic Internet, but found out by speaking with friends that the wires entering his house were not fibre optic cables.

“And then when I went to the garage and looked at the wires, it was clear they were not fibre optic cables,” Abicidan said.

Because of how class-action lawsuits work in Quebec, people who belong to the group are automatically enrolled in the suit. In this case, anyone who was a Bell Fibe subscriber between the years 2012 and 2017 is eligible

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to receive compensation if a judge rules against Bell.

Joey Zukran, the lawyer heading the case against Bell said the amount of damages claimed will be made public in a future court filing.

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