

COLCHESTER PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

News Release

Above Ground Heartland Power Line Would Close School

(Strathcona County) January 20, 2011. The Colchester Parents' Association packed the school library January 17 to discuss the proposed Heartland power line. AltaLink and EPCOR are proposing to build the line above ground only 141 metres from Colchester Elementary School.

Parents discussed the health and safety impacts of overhead high voltage power lines, and listened to reports of scientific and medical studies that show strong correlations between power line electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and many childhood diseases. For example, prolonged exposure to EMFs increases the risk of childhood leukemia up to 5 times the expected rate in the general population, nervous tissue cancer up to 11.8 times the expected rate, brain cancer up to 10.3 times the expected rate, and depression up to 4.7 times the expected rate.

Not only are above ground high voltage power lines hazardous to childrens' health because of EMFs, but the corona effect also causes carcinogenic aerial pollutants like diesel exhaust to remain and concentrate in the lungs.

The approximately 200 students who attend Colchester Elementary School would be exposed to EMFs and the corona effect 6-7 hours a day, 5 days a week, if the Heartland power line is built above ground.

"We can't understand why they (AltaLink and EPCOR) would expose our children to this type of health hazard," said Cheryl Przybilla, President of Colchester Parents' Association. "They've included an underground option in their application to the Alberta Utilities Commission, but they recommend against it because they think it would cost more to bury the line than to run it above ground," Przybilla continued.

Underground cable experts have indicated that the cost of burying high voltage power lines is about the same as building them above ground. And, buried lines have very low maintenance costs and up to $\frac{1}{3}$ the transmission loss costs of overhead lines. Over the 60-year life of the lines, buried lines are actually less costly than overhead lines.

"The real benefit of buried lines," said Gabriel Chemello, Vice President of Colchester Parents' Association, "Is they pose no safety hazard, eliminate the corona effect and reduce the EMF effects almost to zero." Chemello also proposed to Dave Quest, MLA for Strathcona, that the Alberta Government should force EPCOR and AltaLink to

bury this line, especially because it is such a high voltage line - 500 kilovolts - and the towers are a whopping 73 metres high. If the towers buckled in a wind storm or tornado, like many did during the 1987 tornado just west of Colchester School, the towers and power lines could easily fall on top of children playing outside the school.

Bruce Beliveau, Elk Island Public Schools Superintendent, was at the parents' meeting and said the School Board is also opposed to the power line running that close to the school. Both the School Board and the Colchester Parents' Association are registered interveners at the AUC hearings which start in mid-April, 2011.

Strathcona County Mayor Linda Osinchuk, Ward 1 Councillor Vic Bidzinski and Ward 6 Councillor Linton Delainey also attended the meeting. Mayor Osinchuk made it clear that Strathcona County is opposed to an above ground power line and have a petition for County residents to sign supporting an underground line. County Council voted unanimously on a Motion March 3, 2009, indicating the only way they would accept a high voltage power line running through the County is if it was buried.

Parents discussed the possibility of the school shutting down if the Heartland line was built above ground, because so many parents would move their children to other schools to avoid the health and safety hazards. Several of the parents at the meeting were angry about the possibility of the school closing because they had personally attended Colchester as well, and the school also serves as a major centre for community activities.

Przybilla said, "It isn't fair that two power companies can completely ruin a whole community and cause our school to close. Parents have chosen to send their children to Colchester because it's a rural school and because the staff are great. Why should our children have to move just because power companies don't care about our children's health and safety?"

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