

Innisfail objecting to AltaLink preferred route

Alberta Utilities Commission hearings are on in Red Deer into AltaLink's plans

Tuesday, Mar 18, 2014 06:00 am | BY TIM LASIUTA Innisfail Province

The Town of Innisfail is objecting to AltaLink's controversial preferred route through Central Alberta and has sent a senior staff member to make a presentation at the Alberta Utilities Commission hearing in Red Deer.

On March 17, Craig Teal, the town's director of planning and operational services, testified in front of the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) hearing at the Holiday Inn South in Gasoline Alley in objection to the proposed 80L route through the southwest end of Innisfail near Highway 54.

"The Town of Innisfail does not support the preferred route as put forth by AltaLink," said Teal. "Our preference is a line northeast of Innisfail for a variety of reasons we feel make good sense."

Teal said there is a pre-existing condition that dates back to the 1950s to give 80L right-of-way in the Innisfail area so they do not dispute that.

"We object to the route in the south end of town as transmission lines are not attractive, and we want to ensure we are able to attract investment and interest from businesses," said Teal. "There is also the issue of the land the proposed corridor will take.

"Transmission line land competes with residential development," he added. "In terms of land values, can land near a power line be valued the same as land without such a structure? For the town, that would mean lower tax revenues which would hit our bottom line."

Additionally, the town would have to take care of the green space beneath the lines and that would take up taxpayers' money for an asset Innisfailians do not gain any revenue from, said Teal.

"The northeast route is planned to be industrial so any transmission lines would not have as much visual impact as on a residential area," said Teal. "As the industrial area is still in the planning stages we could build around 80L and be more proactive."

Officials from AltaLink are ready to work with whatever option the AUC would recommend, said Peter Brodsky, AltaLink manager of external communications.

"We respect Innisfail's preference for 80L," said Brodsky. "The difference is one kilometre over either route."

The Wachter Group of Innisfail was also scheduled to present before the AUC on Monday morning. Hearings began on March 11 and will continue until March 21 tentatively.