

High-voltage power line a health concern

Re: "Power line proposal upsets residents, but alternatives will cost a lot more; Beware of dubious trade-offs and weak evidence of health risks," by Paula Simons, Sept. 24.

I was disappointed to read Simons' portrayal of residents' concerns and information sharing about overhead high-voltage power lines as fear mongering. She even went so far as to say if you live next to a transportation utility corridor that might only have a road and some buried pipelines running through it, you have no right to be concerned about the negative health impacts of a proposed 500-kilovolt power line constructed in that corridor. What is most upsetting, is the flippant manner in which she not only ignores, but also disregards, the medical and other health research by hundreds of experts.

In her attempts to downplay negative health impacts of high-voltage power line electromagnetic fields (EMFs), she refers to health information on the Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans (RETA) website as misrepresenting what others have reported. The irony is, for the two examples she chose, data from a World Health Organization panel and the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), RETA obtained the information from a document prepared by the NIEHS and sponsored by the

Electric and Magnetic Fields Research and Public Information Dissemination Program. EMFRAPID's purpose statement says it "focuses on finding answers to these key questions: Does exposure to EMFs produced by the generation, transmission, and use of electric energy pose a risk to human health? If so, how significant is the risk, who is at risk, and how can the risk be reduced?" The U.S. Department of Energy administers the overall program and the NIEHS directs the risk assessment and health effects research of the program. EMFRAPID also receives major funding from the electric utility industry.

So, what does this mean? It means the dissemination by RETA of information on EMF impacts on human health funded by the U.S. electric utility industry is called fear mongering by Simons. I find it preposterous that anyone would suggest the electric utility industry would overstate the negative health impacts of their industry.

I encourage *Journal* readers to visit www.reta.ca, which contains six pages of references, primarily on the serious effects of overhead high-voltage power lines and EMFs on the health of humans, livestock, pets and wildlife.

Although this may not have been Simons's intent, we thank her for

providing the opportunity to show that even the electric utility industry (at least in the U.S.) admits overhead high-voltage power line EMFs have serious effects on human health. Is it any wonder then that people who might live next to an overhead 500-kilovolt power line are worried? That is why they want the line buried to significantly reduce both the EMF amplitude and the distance of impact from source, thereby minimizing the negative health effects.

Simons should look at the 1970s establishment of transportation utility corridors, when they were first purchased as buffer zones and greenbelts; then renamed restricted development areas and finally transportation utility corridors, before she offers her opinion on whether or not residents living next to them have a right to complain when the largest overhead high-voltage power line project ever in Alberta is proposed in these corridors.

While we're at it, we also ask that Simons not fear monger regarding potential costs to bury the Heartland power line, when our calculations suggest that the incremental capital costs of underground versus above ground would amount to the cost of a cup of coffee per Alberta household per year.

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Oct. 1/09.