

LETTERS

Buried power lines not too costly

Re: To NIMBY or not; that's the question, Editorial, *The Journal*, Aug. 11.

The editorial writer really should have done more research about the issues involved in the proposed 500-kilovolt electrical transmission lines before unfairly characterizing those opposed to above-ground lines as NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard).

The most prominent local group formed in response to the proposed power lines is RETA (Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans). Even cursory review of the RETA website (<http://reta.site.wordpress.com/>) will make it clear that this is not a NIMBY organization, but that it is very much in favour of responsible electrical transmission for all Albertans.

RETA is not comprised of those in a "tony and well-connected district."

It has members from each of the proposed routes and elsewhere, and it is concerned with the issues relevant to

all Albertans. It seeks critical examination of these issues and to inform the process for the benefit of all.

RETA's position could not be more clear: Where high voltage lines are proposed near homes and schools, then those lines should be buried. RETA does not favour one route over another, and is on record that the best route should be utilized provided that the lines are properly buried.

The writer is quite correct that we require electricity to power our society, but Alberta should be using, adapting and developing optimal technologies that will position the province as a leader. This is not an area where we should be the lowest denominator.

The statement that burying lines underground "costs a fortune" is simply wrong.

There is strong evidence that, over the useful life of the utility, burying lines saves money, and this is merely

taking into account the direct costs and savings.

Short-term, blinkered thinking is not sufficient. When the full cost of the risks to health and environment, the potential for disaster scenarios as a result of having massive above-ground towers and lines in proximity to heavy populations (ice storms, tornadoes, underground pipelines).

Consider lightning strikes on a tower: Would an ethylene pipeline explosion in a major urban area, or close to a school, concern you?

And when decrease of property values are taken into account, the truth is that burying power lines will save a fortune and, quite possibly, lives.

The question of who should pay for it is a good beginning, but the answer starts with the obvious followup question ignored by the writer: Who will benefit?

Does your writer feel entitlement to the benefit of power for "iPods, furnaces and laptops" with the costs,

risks and burdens to be borne disproportionately by those living along the transmission route?

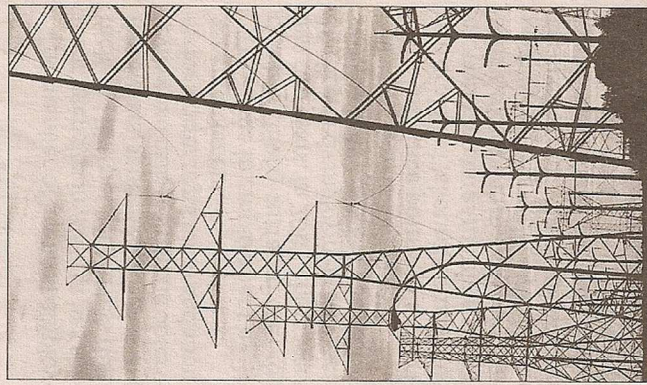
Remember as well that the power generation and transmission companies are for-profit enterprises that are allowed to pass their costs on to others.

Is *The Journal* advocating that one group, randomly chosen, be massively disadvantaged so that everyone else can enjoy a windfall?

Rather than speaking in vague generalities about a "fortune," the process should examine the real long-term costs and benefits.

While those costs and benefits have not yet been fully defined, cost forecasts from proponents of the above-ground lines indicate that the incremental upfront costs of burying these lines near homes and schools might be as little as 10 cents per month to each ratepayer in Alberta.

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THE JOURNAL, FILE
Above-ground electrical transmission lines on Edmonton's north side