

# If you want a monster power line, bury it

Several recent letters to the editor have challenged the notion that the costs to bury the proposed 500-kilovolt Heartland Transmission Line should be spread among all Alberta electricity consumers.

The basis for the opposition to this principle appears to primarily be the suggestion that families who moved near transportation utility corridors should have known that eventually a high-voltage power line would be built next to their homes.

Here are a few facts which will hopefully help set the record straight.

When many landowners sold their farmland just outside Edmonton to the Alberta Government in the 1970s, they were told that the land would be used as a buffer and greenbelt between the growing City

of Edmonton and the surrounding rural agricultural communities. In fact, most residents who have lived next to these areas for longer periods of time still refer to this land as the "greenbelt," a term which even the Alberta government used several decades ago.

Then, in 1974, the Alberta government passed regulations formally establishing this greenbelt.

For example, within the County of Strathcona, the Sherwood Park West Restricted Development Area Regulation was passed in 1974 and updated in 2008.

Under this regulation (both the 1974 and 2008 versions), the Alberta government may only authorize uses in the greenbelt or restricted development area which, and I quote from the regulation, "are compatible with

the retention of the environment of the area for agricultural purposes or the propagation of plant or animal life and, generally, the preservation of the environment of that area, and do not have a detrimental or destructive effect on the land surface within the area."

Some years later, the Alberta government then unilaterally changed the name of the area from "greenbelt" or "restricted development area" to "transportation utility corridor."

Now, the last time I looked, 200-foot-tall and almost as wide towers and 500-kilovolt double-circuit power lines are not agricultural products, plants or animals. Nor, would these towers and lines help to preserve the environment of the area.

However, they would have a det-

rimental and destructive effect on the land surface within the area. It is this most significant contradiction between what the land was initially set aside for by legislation, and the proposed 500-kilovolt power line, that has residents so upset and concerned. Can you blame them? And this is one of the reasons why those residents who live along the transportation utility corridors are saying to the Alberta government, "if you want to put this monster of a power line in these corridors, bury it."

Other reasons they give include the documented impacts of overhead high-voltage power lines on health, safety, property values and esthetics.

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