

## Heartland Line application pushed back

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An application to the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) over a proposed 500 kV electrical transmission line has been postponed until the fall as further technical analysis and public consultation is needed, according to EPCOR officials.

The Heartland Transmission Project – which would bring power from the south of Edmonton to the industrial heartland north of the city – was first proposed in 2007 to bring power to oil sands upgraders which were under consideration for the region. Currently, it is believed that only two of the original nine upgraders may go ahead.

The Heartland Project Team had originally hoped to present their application to the AUC by the spring of 2010 but are now tentatively scheduling a fall application date, although that too could change in the future.

"It's going to take longer than we anticipated," said EPCOR spokesperson Tim le Riche. "We want to be extremely thorough with our application (to the AUC). There are some things on the technical side that require some further study."

Part of the technical aspects being looked at include the possibility of using Direct Current (DC) as well as burying portions of the line rather than running via overhead towers.

Members of the advocacy group Responsible Electrical Transmission for Albertans (RETA) have long maintained the line should be buried when approaching any major population centres, schools, hospitals or other similar facilities. The Heartland Project Team is reviewing the results of an underground feasibility study to determine the cost effectiveness of burying portions of the line.

Le Riche added that this is not viewed as a delay.

"It does have to be built by 2013 and these things don't get built overnight," he said when asked if the application could be further postponed.

RETA members say the delay in submitting the application should be used by the provincial government to re-assess the need for the line, something they say is completely unneeded.

"Not only will there be little or no requirement for coal-fired electricity from Wabamun to feed the Industrial Heartland, especially since most refineries co-generate their own electricity, but there really isn't enough coal-fired generation to even begin to meet the Heartland line's proposed capacity of 6,000 megawatts. If this line gets built, it could well be called The Power Line from Nowhere to Nowhere," said RETA president, Bruce Johnson.

Le Riche did not indicate that any re-evaluation of the need for the line would take place.

In April, RETA sent a letter to Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach requesting he review the need for the proposed line.

Johnson said the extra time will help RETA prepare for the AUC application hearings where the group will voice its concerns and opposition.

"Although this postponement draws out the application process over a longer period of time and creates more uncertainty for thousands of residents, parents of school children and businesses, the extra time this affords us to prepare for the upcoming legal battle and the AUC hearings will be put to good use", said Johnson.

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