



Wednesday, January 9th, 2008

Consider the west side

Sun Dec 2 2007

Dear Premier Gary Doer:

We the undersigned, with the public interest as our highest consideration, request that the Provincial Government reconsider its decision to pursue development of the Bipole III HVDC line down the West side of the province.

Manitoba Hydro is the jewel of Manitoba's economy, exporting power to over 30 electric utilities in four wholesale markets in Canada and the mid-western United States.

Manitoba Hydro does this while providing the lowest domestic power rates in Canada to Manitobans. With over 5,000 employees, Manitoba Hydro is an international leader on many fronts and, with its leadership and support, some of the greatest research achievements regarding power generation and distribution have been developed right here in our province.

We applaud the provincial government's efforts to support continued growth of Manitoba Hydro with new generating stations and transmission capacity.

The recent decision by the provincial government to pursue development of the Bipole III HVDC line down the west side of the province appears to us to require Manitoba Hydro to act in direct contravention of what we perceive to be its prime mandate, the efficient and secure production of electrical power for the benefit of all Manitobans.

We are concerned about hundreds of millions of dollars of increased capital costs, which will be paid with borrowed money and negatively impact on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans for years to come.

We are concerned about the increased line losses, also potentially in the hundreds of millions of dollars over the lifetime of the line. This is a disservice that would directly reduce the volume of potential export sales and negatively impact on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans for the entire functional life of the project.

We are concerned about the negative impact this decision will have on the environment. At a time when society is recognizing the importance of environmental stewardship, this decision is the antithesis of "green" thinking.

The wasting of clean power over the long life of these facilities could otherwise be used to displace existing coal burning electric generation. In addition, a west side line would be longer and result in a larger carbon footprint from the manufacturing of the increased materials for the additional towers and line.

We are concerned about stability and security of the power grid. Reducing the possibility of power failures and outages is fundamental to proper design, and the development of a third HVDC that is geographically separated from the two existing lines is critical. The west side route does not allow for "paralleling" based on current technologies, a recognized measure to compensate, in an emergency, for temporary loss of an HVDC line.

The decision to build a west side line will force Manitoba Hydro to implement what we consider to be a major design limitation which will, for the functional life of the project, reduce the integrity of our power system and the security and safety of Manitobans.

In addition, the west side will take longer to construct, thereby leaving our transmission system at risk for a period where an east side line could already be operational.

We are concerned that your west side choice appears to be motivated by two issues which in our view are and should be secondary to the concerns outlined above:

First, regarding the potential for a Manitoba UNESCO World Heritage site there has been no direct comparison of the environmental impacts for the two routes and no clear signal that the eastern route would be mutually exclusive to a designated UNESCO site.

Second, your position that the east side route cannot be approved due to aboriginal concerns, in apparent disregard of the fact that the leaders of many of the east side aboriginal communities have held press conferences and spoken openly about the importance of the line on the east side for development of their communities. Clearly many of the residents of the east side would like to have this decision re-considered in their communities.

We, collectively and individually, are of the view that it would be irresponsible to push forward with the west side choice based on current information. If your government has additional information, which has not been made public, we now call upon you to divulge it.

All citizens of Manitoba deserve to know whatever underlies a decision that will force Manitoba Hydro to abandon efficiency, its mandate and its ability to serve the interests of Manitobans.

Unless you can publicly provide compelling and cogent reasons for the west side choice, we urge you to reconsider.

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