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Willy Nayet  
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(Commission Secretary)

My name is Willy Nayet. My wife and I farm south of Ste Agathe. Some of the land we farm belong to our family and spans from Osborne area to just west of Ste Agathe.

The bipole 3 route will run through 2 and ½ miles of our family's land.

We are very concerned about having these structures built on our land.

We used to live on a dairy farm near Steinbach.

We had bought land there and the first thing we did was to hire a track hoe and bulldozer to bury several stone piles that previous owners had gathered on the fields.

We did this in order to farm the land more efficiently.

We are willing to invest in our fields in order to remove these obstacles. It is costly initially, but better for the long run.

Why would we do the opposite now and allow Hydro to set up pylons in the middle of our fields. It would be like someone paying us back what it cost us to bury the stone piles, only to have them back on our fields!

Once these pylons are installed on our fields, it would take a very big hole to bury them.

Of course from an economic and practical point of view, this is a very bad deal for us.

The extra costs of circling those pylons, overlapping with seed, chemical and fertilizer... the extra fuel and time. How is that good for the environment?

What about those applying manure on their land.

Our great NDP government came up with the manure management regulations.

Will the government penalize them for over applying on the overlaps around those towers?

We are not certain at this point exactly where the poles will be located within our fields.

Of course it will certainly affect the topography and the drainage of our fields.

On one of our fields, the line will likely be right on a major drainage ditch.

How will this be addressed?

Will Manitoba Hydro pay for the extra cost of re-routing the drainage ditch? This will affect the way the whole section drains.

We spend a lot of time and money over the years in order to have proper drains on our land. It is crucial for us to remove excess water efficiently or it has the potential of ruining crops. Who will pay for that?

I understand one of the reasons the government wants to have bipole 3 is to have an alternate route in case something was to happen to the other lines.

A good friend of mine is an engineer in Germany and his company inspects power plants for efficiency throughout the world. He was here to visit last March. When I described the bipole 3 project to him, he suggested it would be much more efficient for the province to build a natural gas power plant near Winnipeg than building the line, even if it was on a standby basis and to be fired up in case the lines are down. Has the province looked into this alternative?

During the 97 "storm of the century" (which preceded the "flood of the century") we were out of power for several hours on our dairy farm.

Manitoba Hydro did not offer a second alternate route to bring in power to our farm. They told us to install a standby generator.

~~A natural gas power plant would be just that, a stand-by generator for southern Manitoba.~~  
There is already such a plant in Selkirk. Could we not add on to it in order to meet the new demand? We could even produce cheaper electricity with the low cost natural gas if we wanted to.

Speaking of the flood of '97. At it's peak, the Red River was some 30 miles wide at its widest east-west points.

Now, the routing of Bypole 3 is almost exactly there. Right through the Red River flood zone. How intelligent is that?

How will Manitoba hydro be able to have access to those towers if something was to happen to the line during a flood event like we had in '97?

I would like to tell you about our experience as we have a line going north-south through some of our fields, as well as through my mother in law's yard.

This consists of two wooden poles carrying 5 lines bringing power to Letellier, and to the states. It's not that we don't like these poles in the middle of the field. We hate them!

We are always somewhat nervous when we send a driver in those fields whether it be for seeding, cultivating, harrowing or spraying.

Will he be careful and not touch the poles with the machinery?

Will he not leave too much of a gap unseeded or not sprayed were weeds will grow wild?

We avoid doing this field at night because of the extra danger involved.

Then, someone has to go there through the crop and spot spray around those poles in order to kill the weeds.

Last year, we nearly had a accident while moving a grain auger on my mother in law's yard. The line goes right through the edge of her farm yard.

I was unloading a grain truck and the bin was full. I needed to switch to a different bin in order to unload the truck completely. I figured I would simply move the auger to another bin and I did not lower the auger as much as I should have, not thinking about the line been right there. As I moved the auger away from the first bin and turned to line up to the next bin, the end of the auger swung towards the line.

By chance I glanced at the other end of the auger and saw from the angle I was in it seemed to already be touching the line.

I stepped on the brakes and thought "I am still alive". I immediately moved the hydraulic lever to lower the auger.

My heart was pounding as I knew if that auger touched the line, it would not be good.

I needed to calm down and stepped out for a few minutes. The truck driver and I looked straight up from underneath where auger was and we could see the auger must have been within 2 feet of the line.

I did not sleep well that night thinking of what could have happened had the auger touched the line. The next day, I called our local Manitoba Hydro office.

I explained that I felt this line was way too low where it crossed my mother in law's yard and needed to be raised. The man from Manitoba Hydro came and I asked him what would have happened if the auger had touch the line.

From the conversation we had I remember his points that first you don't need to touch the line, the electricity can arch to the auger. There would have been a few sparks, then a lot of smoke and then the metal would start melting. All tires would have blown. I asked if I would have been able to jump out of the tractor and avoid been electrocuted, he said I likely would not have lived long enough to

even think about jumping out!

This is a 230,000 kilowatt line and there are 5 wires on these poles. A normal line servicing a farm yard carries 7000 kilowatts. This is 32 times what a regular line carries.

He measured the lowest point from the line to the driveway with his electronic meter and said it was 28 feet from the ground.

I asked if Manitoba Hydro could raise the poles like they have done in certain intersections.

He said 28 feet is within their allowable range and it would be too expensive to raise the line. He suggested we redesign the yard in order to avoid working so close to the line.

This is not a feasible solution to us.

He offered to give me some yellow warning stickers.

This is just an accident waiting to happen. How much is one's life worth?

We have spent thousands of dollars to bury our own service lines underground for safety reasons, If Hydro is not willing to spend the money to raise the line, do we need to have an accident before they decided it needs to be done?

A few weeks later, they decided to cut a row of mature trees which apparently were too close to the line. It is very difficult for trees to grow in the yard due to soil type, rabbits and deers, and the weather.

There are very few mature trees on the yard although hundreds had been planted over the years. We like to have trees for wind break and esthetics and the wildlife.

Manitoba Hydro decided the trees were too close to the line. The trees themselves were not but the branches came with 15 feet of the line therefore the trees needed to go.

We argued but they fired up the chainsaws anyway.

The only thing this accomplished was that my mother in law now has a better view of the hydro line from her kitchen window.

The line going through my mother in law's place was put up in the 60s.

At the time, Manitoba Hydro offered farmers compensation which may have seemed like a lot of money back then.

Today, some 50 years later, we have to continue to put up with this line crossing our yards and fields. Our input costs have increased. Our machinery is larger.

What seemed reasonable back then becomes expensive and problematic today. The previous owner may have been lured into signing a deal with a few dollars, but this line is costing us each and every year and will continue to cost and be a danger for our family and employees for generations.

On a quiet day, you can hear the electric current sizzling through the line. A constant reminder of the danger that hangs over our heads.

There has been a lot of technical advancement over the last 50 years. The machinery we drive, the way we farm our land will likely be different 50 years from now.

For example, next spring, a company in Fargo will be launching a new tractor line, without a cab, no driver.

A unit controlled by their own new "Area Positioning System".

Will those pylons and power lines keep us from making use of future technology opportunities?

Because of the issues we've had with the existing line, we have not had a good experience with Manitoba Hydro. And now we're looking at having more poles over more fields with more voltage and more risks.

What about our health? For humans and livestock.

As a dairy farmer, I am glad the Bipole 3 route does not run close to our dairy farm. We would likely need to relocate if this was the case.

There has been extensive research done on the effect of stray voltage on dairy cows.

It is easier to measure the effect of electricity on dairy cows as there is a direct impact on production, and reproduction, which is noticeable and can be measured. Within the industry, we are aware that the tolerable levels of power companies are much higher than that of a cow.

Farmers were left on their own when Hydro would test and say the stray voltage is within tolerable levels.

Now, if stray voltage affects livestock, it likely affects humans as well. It may be simply too difficult if not impossible to diagnose.

How does the magnetic field affect the people who live and work near those lines?

Today we hear there is no adverse effect, just like back in the 80s, many power companies were saying their stray voltage tolerance of 10 volts. had no adverse effect on livestock. We know today that the threshold should be closer to half of a volt based on new research.

Many dairy farmers lost their shirts due to stray voltage and the power supply companies were washing their hands.

The farm land value will be affected by the line as a buyer will not place as much value on a field with a line compared to one without. The extra costs of farming the land, liability and the extra risks involved will not make those properties attractive to a potential purchaser whether for farming or for residential purposes.

All landowners will be affected by this.

Maybe the pair of bald eagles we sometimes see near an old farm yard on one of our fields will find those poles will make a nice perch. That is if they don't get electrocuted.

The most frustrating part is that there are alternatives.

This project is going to create a debt all Manitobans will have to pay through their Hydro bill for something which does not make economical sense, that is bad for our farms, bad for the environment, bad for our health, and will be an eyesore on our fields for ever.

Manitoba Hydro has been running TV ads to encourage Manitobans to become "power smart".

How is Manitoba Hydro being power smart when the extra energy loss of the lengthy line will burn many thousands of kilowatts per day!

How can that be good for the environment?

You should lead by example and cancel this environmentally disastrous project.