

To all members of the CEC commission,

My name is Gerald Lapointe, my wife Solange and I have been farming together since 1976. Our ancestors have farmed in the Ste. Agathe area since 1896. We are the third generation that has been making a living in agriculture. We have 4 sons who are also involved in the operation. The affected property is on river lots 543, 545, NE-10-7-2E and NW-10-7-2E, a total of about 560 acres. This specific piece of land has been farmed by Lapointes since 1906. Our home and farmyard is on river lot 543 which would be about 520 ft from the proposed line. On the map we indicate where the line is proposed to run and also the proximity of our farm.

We would have approximately 3 miles of land directly affected by this proposed transmission line. Living along the Red River all parcels of land are measured as river lots which are 660 ft wide and 2 miles long, making them already narrow lots to work with large equipment. In this proposed route we also have a 240 acre parcel which is NE-10-7-2E and NW-10-7-2E that fortunately have no visible encumbrances existing such as hydro or telephone poles. Therefore it is easy to work this field but, the towers would change all that.

We have several environmental concerns about this proposed route. The first concern is the proximity of the unsightly towers close to our home and farmyard. Who wants to live 500 ft from towers? We certainly don't!! We are worried about the noise, having to listen to the constant hum or crackle of the line that is worse in bad weather. We are stressed about the uncertainty of health issues and the visual aspects of this project. We have noticed that our shelter belt surrounding our farmyard does not grow properly underneath the existing hydro line. So, what does this indicate for our own health? Also, what about stray voltage? What are the risks? We don't have any answers to these questions and it gravely concerns us.

Another concern we have is working around these towers. As previously mentioned the river lots are only 660 ft. wide. The towers and easement would take 216 ft. As a result this reduces the land width available for producing a crop to 440 ft, making it very difficult to work with today's wide farm equipment. For example we use an air drill that is 45 ft wide and 100 ft sprayer. Using this equipment around 9 towers would oblige us to make 18 additional headlands in order to straighten out each pass, therefore adding to fuel, seed, chemical and fertilizer costs. This means double of everything and we will be continually farming this land so it will add up to huge additional costs in the thousands for every year that we try to produce a crop. Unnecessary use of chemicals and fuel creates more environmental issues to deal with.

Another concern we have is the feasibility of aerial applications around these towers. We discussed this problem with a few local aerial applicators which we employ to apply fungicides on our crops. They have indicated that working around towers and lines is out of the question because of how dangerous the job would be. They cannot fly under the lines because it's against the law. Also the aerial applicator cannot fly within the 216 ft easement of the transmission line right of way because of safety concerns.

Since the aerial applicator cannot complete the job properly of spraying the entire parcel we would have to do it ourselves depending if the conditions are right. If the land is wet, the aerial applicator would have been able to complete the job if the transmission line were not there. If the land is wet we cannot access the easement area with our sprayer because it would get stuck. Also we will have more costs added to grow a crop. Again this adds extra costs and extra chemicals which aren't good for the environment.

Another environmental concern we have is the crop and land damage in the year of construction and following years due to soil compaction. Soil productivity, would likely be affected primarily due to the use of heavy equipment and vehicles, disturbance of surface materials during grading, excavation of foundations, and removal of vegetation. The results are losses of soil structure; losses of topsoil and subsoil material, impairment of soil quality are anticipated to have an effect on the future crops. Then we will also have to deal with the garbage left behind such as bolts, nuts, unused crushed stone mixed in with dirt, broken insulators, metal strapping of construction material, cardboard, wire, wood and concrete dribbling. We have personally dealt with MTS (fibre optic line), Manitoba Hydro and Winnipeg Pipeline who say that the topsoil will be removed in order to preserve the value of the soil. But, our experience so far has been that the construction crews don't do it because there's isn't sufficient supervision of work crews who do not follow the directives.

Then we need to discuss our observations of the existing bipoles. We are concerned about the abundance of Canadian and sow thistle weeds underneath the towers. These weeds are left to grow which eventually spread to the adjoining crops which result in yield reductions and poorer soil productivity. Who will be responsible for the upkeep of the land and weed control underneath each tower which is 576 sq ft? This would be an ongoing and additional unsightly problem and cost. It can't be good for the environment to have these weeds spreading all over the countryside. They possibly would become a noxious weed problem.

Another observation we have made is one that will affect the bird population. Every spring and fall we see huge flocks of Canada geese take their migratory path directly over the proposed route. These lines will be dangerous for the birds because they will inadvertently fly into the lines causing their deaths. Since we live by the river it's lovely to see the geese land in the Red River on a daily basis.

Our provincial government has decided to build this bipole line on the best and most intensively productive agricultural land area in southern Manitoba. According to the maps provided this area covers almost the width of 2/3 of the province, from highway 13 to highway 12 and then some more going back up north. Manitoba is known as an agricultural province worldwide. But they are willing to waste prime agricultural land! The government is also willing to put people's lives at risk because of uncertain health factors. They also don't care about the livelihood of the farming taxpayers or the agricultural industry in general. Billions more will be spent to go on the west side at the taxpayer's expense for a government that is already in a deficit. Does this make sense? Is this what you call a responsible government who should consider all of the population of Manitoba? The NDP government does not care about farmers!!!

