

CEC Hearing: BiPole III Transmission Project

Presenter: Margaret Rempel
Friday, October 25, 2012

My name is Marg Rempel and I own and operate a mixed grain and livestock farm in the RM of Hanover, about 15 miles east of here. I have been farming at that location for 37 years now. A large hydro power transmission line crosses my property, impacting approximately 630 acres of the land we farm. Heavy transmission lines are a significant cost and inconvenience in a number of ways, and I thought perhaps you would find it interesting to get a glimpse of the financial implications of that existing power line to my farming operation.

- 1) Time - Our crops require seeding, harrowing, herbicide application, fungicide application, sometimes swathing, combining, manure injection, fall tillage, and harrowing again, or approximately nine passes per year. If it takes an extra 3 minutes to maneuver around each pole with each pass, that's an extra 60 minutes per pass, times 9 passes adds up to 540 minutes or 9 hours. Paying an employee \$18/hour amounts to an extra \$162 per year. Over 37 years my out-of-pocket expense has been approximately **\$5900.00**.
- 2) Repairs - Sooner or later there are instances of equipment requiring repairs due to the bumps and bruises of contact with the poles. A very conservative amount over the years might be **\$5000.00**, not including down time which can be very costly, especially if the weather turns unfavorable.
- 3) Weeds - Weed proliferation around the poles is a continual challenge. The option for weed control is spraying with a backpack sprayer, and/or a weed whacker. Using an ATV to transport the sprayer and extra water and herbicides tramples the growing crop. Assigning again a conservative \$800 cost per year (chemical + time + several applications) to address the weed problem over 37 years means **\$29,600** has gone out of my pocket.
- 4) Options - Heavy power transmission lines mean that aerial application of herbicides or fungicides is not an option. Most cropping seasons in our part of southeastern Manitoba have involved dealing with excess moisture. Crop protection products are obviously, most effective if application happens at the optimum time for the crop. Five days later reduces the benefit, and that is not an unusual amount of time to have to wait for the ground to dry enough to carry the sprayer. Even then, we have often had to deal with significant mud ruts, which are not only hard on the equipment doing the subsequent operations on that field, the ruts usually require additional fuel, time, and tillage to close them up and prepare a reasonable seed bed for the following spring. If for 10 years of the past 37 I've had a 3 bushel per acre yield loss on 450 acres of canola, that would amount to 1350 bushels per year, and 13,500 bushels yield loss over 10 years. At an average price of \$8.00 per bushel, that means a loss of **\$108,000** for my farm.

(In actuality, there have been many more than 10 wet years, and canola is a lot more than \$8.00 a bushel.) Again, this is a conservative calculation, and it excludes all the related incidental but very real costs.

Minimally, a total of **\$148,000** ... for one farmer. (Yes, it would have been my preference to have those dollars in my retirement fund, but the choice was taken away from me.) I understand that public utilities cross private land. That's the way our system works. And it is assumed that farmers will just bear the additional cost – again – on our own. So I hope that Manitoba Hydro and the provincial government understand that the compensation they've suggested with regard to Bi-Pole III is viewed on the part of farmers, as vastly insufficient.

I'm presenting a very abbreviated glimpse into the real and recurring costs to me, and to others whose land already has power lines crossing it. Please understand why we are very apprehensive to have yet another line cross our properties. The frustrating part of the BiPole III proposal is that this route across thousands and thousands of acres of some of Manitoba's finest farmland is not necessary, let alone desirable.

Beyond the costs I've mentioned, the current route will apparently add another \$1000 per year to my hydro electric bill, again unnecessarily. But that extra grand will not only appear on my statement but on the statements of every average customer of Manitoba Hydro living in our province.

In the past, favorable hydro electricity costs have been one important factor in encouraging business, industry, manufacturing, and agricultural livestock production and processing to operate and to continue to operate in our province. It is an advantage we should be seriously guarding. This proposed route for BiPole III erodes that economic advantage with a line that is unnecessarily long, thus incurring more capital costs, cutting 60 km more trees than the "East Side Option", and means a significantly greater loss of electricity once in operation. That 'stray' electricity is of serious concern for human health and the functioning of our electronic equipment, and it is also a very serious concern for our livestock production facilities, which also depend on sophisticated electronic equipment, often very sensitive to such interference.

As you can tell, I'm adding my voice to the hundreds of thousands of voices calling for BiPole III route to follow the "East Side Option".

Thank you for hearing my comments.

Margaret Rempel

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