

## **Clean Environment Commission**

**October 24, 2012 10:00 a.m. Canad Inn – Portage la Prairie**

Mr. Chairman, members of committee

My name is Blaine Pedersen and I am the MLA for Midland which covers south central Manitoba.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today. I will keep my remarks on the proposed route only and the effects it will have on landowners, homeowners and their families, and the environment.

The Municipalities of Grey and South Norfolk are contained within my constituency. However, I have had considerable dialogue with landowners in the neighbouring municipalities of North Norfolk, Portage la Prairie, Westbourne, McDonald, Richot and others.

The area encompassing these municipalities contains some of the best farmland, the most intensive agriculture, and the densest population for a rural area in Manitoba.

I have maintained communication with landowners throughout Southern MB as well as concerned citizens throughout MB.

I have a mailing list of some 350 homes, I have held public meetings, I have attended and participated in committee meetings with Manitoba Hydro in the Legislature. I have visited affected landowners, as well as being available for

phone calls, and my Carman office has been a hub for information pertaining to BiPole III. In short, I am well versed with BiPole III landowner issues throughout Southern Manitoba.

In my consultation, there are four (4) primary areas of concern:

- 1) route
- 2) lack of technical answers
- 3) proposed compensation
- 4) liability

While your committee cannot and will not address the political interference in Manitoba Hydro's route planning, the proposed route raises many questions! By my count, the route crosses nine (9) rail lines, nine (9) major highways, including the TransCanada twice, and Hwy 75. Numerous Provincial Grid Roads are also crossed. This does not bode well for safety, reliability and increases access to the line by the general public.

The route also takes numerous turns and twists trying to avoid homes, yard sites, etc throughout southern MB. This not only affects costs; but is there a reliability issue involved?

The Commission needs to explain why the detour around Sections 3, 4, 5, 6; Township 8; Range 5 W1?? Can the Commission explain why the detour around Section 20; Township 7; Range 4 E1??

Transmission lines and intensive agriculture do not mix. The Agriculture Technical Report (Nov 2011) goes into great detail on the effects this proposed transmission line will have on the agricultural industry. Issues such as lower land values, aerial spraying, liability insurance costs, weed control, overlap of farming operations are all discussed at length. However on page 68 of the report, the solution to these issues is “provide compensation based on a onetime payment”. This is not acceptable and your committee must include this in your examination as there is long term socio-economic implications at risk here should you approve the route as presented.

The report also discusses irrigation at great length. We are on the cusp of a major expansion in irrigation on the sandy soils of this area. This expansion is based on increasing land values, strong commodity prices, and technical advances in ag practises. Retention ponds are being developed as a source for water. The report highlights the risks of high voltage lines in close contact with not only the irrigation pivots, but also the increased conductivity when fertilizer is mixed with the water as it is applied. What cost does agriculture and food production have to pay as a result of this transmission line? The CEC will have to decide- a robust agricultural industry supplying raw materials for further processing **OR** a hydro transmission line.

There are many types of livestock operations; hog and dairy intensive operations; beef cattle on pasture and in feed yard operations. I have heard concerns regarding the impact of a transmission line on caribou, moose, and elk. The CEC must also address the long term concerns of farms whose livestock will be permanently located under this proposed line.

With the selection of this route, many questions from affected landowners have been raised. Magnetic fields are a primary example. I am not an electrical engineer and so I raise these questions seeking informed, clear answers. It is incumbent upon the CEC to address these concerns using technical expertise away from Manitoba Hydro.

A few examples: The dairy farm located on 1-8-8 W1 will be within several hundred metres of this line. This dairy has already dealt with “tingle” voltage in their barn which had a tremendous impact on milk production with negative financial consequences. What assurances do they have that this line will have NO LONG TERM effect on their operation?

As the line passes through the middle of crop land, questions have arisen about spontaneous combustion from dust coming from agricultural equipment and the clouds of chaff from combines passing under the line. This fall was an excellent case in point - extremely dry conditions producing a lot of static electricity. What is the affect of having a 500 MGV DC line directly overhead of these operations? Will farmers have to take precautions under these conditions? How does the CEC evaluate these concerns?

Is there a magnetic field created as a train passes under the line or as semis pass under the line on the numerous rail lines and highways aforementioned? How will the CEC address these questions?

The route passes within 230 Metres of the residence on 2-8-5 W1, within 216 metres of the residence on 5-8-7W1. Is this an acceptable separation distance? A resident on 1-8-5 W has a cochlear implant. What factors do the CEC use for determining these and other health concerns from living so close to a line of this magnitude over a long term. Simply accepting MB Hydro's mantra "don't worry be happy- we'll give you a onetime compensation" is not good enough! The CEC must address these concerns.

The local environment will be affected as a result of this transmission line. As we all know, Manitoba's weather is anything but constant. The Red River is known for its ability to flood large tracts of valley land during the spring melt. Does a transmission line in a flood area pose a danger to people, animals, wildlife, even the motoring public? What about localized flooding across southern MB? Will there need to be special precautions taken in proximity to this line during these events? How will this be addressed in your report?

Shelterbelts will be removed if this route is approved. Section 2 – 8 – 8 W1; Section 5 – 8 – 7 W1; Section 5 – 8 – 4 W 1 are just three of many examples of this. What is the environmental cost of removing these shelterbelts which protect the land from wind erosion and aid in the absorption of greenhouse gases??

The residents on 2-8-8W1 came from Germany a few years back to escape what they referred to as the "industrial crush". They found this small quiet hobby farm and now are faced with having their shelterbelt completely removed leaving their house, small stock and themselves facing this hydro line. Their comment to me

was “this is why we left Germany”. Should they decide to give up and sell, will MB Hydro compensate them for their loss in property value? These are the social issues the CEC must address.

My last topic of concern is that of compensation and liability. Many of the landowners do not want this line across their property for reasons I have already outlined. **The amount of compensation being offered is NOT the issue.** There are many multi-million dollar operations involved so the amount of compensation being offered is miniscule when compared to the overall size of operations.

**However, the liability factor is real.** Landowners will have to purchase additional insurance to protect themselves, not only from accidents with structures with their own equipment and employees, but also from accidents by the general public on their land. As Manitoba Hydro is only leasing the land (albeit in perpetuity) the landowner is liable for any structural damage occurring on their land.

So, if a landowner is adamant about not signing a lease with Manitoba Hydro, are they now facing expropriation? Manitoba Hydro has refused to answer this. The CEC must address this as part of your report because this causes a great deal of angst among landowners. This is a huge social issue. Should this project be approved, and landowners and MB Hydro cannot agree on compensation, are landowners just going to be pushed aside and forced to face the personal and financial consequences on their own. I look forward to your response.

Summing up, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, it is my sincere hope you will take seriously your role to address the social and environmental concerns which I and many others have raised!!

I have included many questions for you to answer and I have tried to remain “non-political” in addressing these concerns. I continue to be disappointed with the non-answers from the current government and I remain wary of anything Manitoba Hydro has to say.

Your Committee needs to be through and travel the route, meeting firsthand the affected families through southern Manitoba and see the negative impact this proposed line is having on the environment, on food production and on the people affected. I have done this and you should too. Your Committee needs to be responsible and do a complete and honest assessment on the impacts of BiPole III through southern MB.

I wish you could have been with me when I drove into a farm yard two years ago. A young mother was outside watching over her three children. As I introduced myself and explained why I was there, the tears came in her eyes as she pointed to the west side of her yard. She said “they’re going to take out that entire bush and my children will have to grow up under that line.”

Thank you