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February 18, 2010

Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
200 Scotia Centre
Box 938
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N7
Attention: Mr. Alan Ehrlich, Senior Environmental Assessment Officer

Taltson Hydro Expansion Project Transmission Line Route Adjustment – Reliance

Dear Mr. Ehrlich,

Please accept this submission for your consideration, with regard to the above-mentioned topic.

I resided in Yellowknife for 23 years, from 1982 until 2005, at which time I retired from the GNWT, and moved back to my home town in southern Alberta.

While in the North, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to spend a few weeks each year at Trophy Lodge, at Fort Reliance. To me, the east end of Great Slave Lake is the most spectacular place on the planet, regardless of season. As a result of my visits to the lodge, I've become good friends with many residents of the area.

There is a problem when smaller interests such as local residents and businesses, and people who simply care for the area, are suddenly forced to defend themselves against a tremendous negative impact because of an ill-conceived proposal from Deze Energy. For this reason, I am submitting my comments to your review board.

Why propose an above-ground Reliance Route?

The Lutsel K'e First Nation have been clear that they do not want the transmission line to cross the Lockhart River at any point from its headwaters to Great Slave Lake, and Deze Energy appears to have taken this view seriously and without question. What is unclear is why Deze would even consider proposing this alternative, whereby they suggest area residents should have no problem with large, noisy, and intrusive energy lines and towers literally right in their front yards -in one case directly over the residence of Roger Catling and his young family, who reside on Fairchild Point.

Trophy Lodge is only a few hundred meters from the two points of land that Deze Energy proposes connecting with towers and a high-capacity line. This lodge has a priceless feature view, looking west from their dock and main building, through the gap between Maufelly and Fairchild Points, with McLeod Bay running all the way to the horizon, as far as the eye can see. Due to currents, the best fishing in the eastern end of the East Arm is in the gap between the points, directly under the route of the proposed line. It is inconceivable that guests would travel many thousands of kilometers, at considerable

expense, to sit under a transmission line. These guests, who are also contributors to the NWT economy in Yellowknife, only come to this part of the world to enjoy precisely what they do not have at home: great fishing in a pristine wilderness setting. Building the proposed transmission line would without doubt have a major negative economic impact on Trophy Lodge.

Parks Canada has been negotiating with all interested parties for years, with respect to establishing a new national park in the area. I am not clear on the size of this park, but surely it would include the area in question. The last thing that should be in a national park, particularly in a feature area that has historical significance, would be a crackling, high-capacity power line.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada have made it clear, in the filings related to this matter, that underwater transmission lines are part of standard industry practice, and therefore could become part of the solution.

I would suspect that Deze has proposed this route and an above-ground structure, for economic reasons alone, for the good of their company, and to the detriment of all others, whether they live and operate businesses in the area, or are regular or future visitors.

Great Slave Lake as viewed by others

I have had the opportunity to travel throughout the USA, promoting Trophy Lodge at various fishing shows. You may be surprised at the awe and reverence displayed by Americans, who totally envy anybody who has the very good fortune to live near Great Slave Lake, and to experience the Last Frontier first-hand. The same awe and reverence applies to any sportsman or lover of the outdoors in southern Canada. They are all well aware of our pristine wilderness, the fresh air and clean water, its miles and miles of nature free of ugly signs of industry.

And now, despite the options for going around or under Great Slave Lake, Deze Energy wants to run a transmission line over top of it.

Timing of the supplementary review process

Local interested parties were given 18 days from the time they were notified of the route adjustment, to complete and submit some kind of intervention that would have to be of sufficient substance and quality to merit any kind of consideration from the review board.

The allotted time is totally insufficient. This is corroborated by the letter sent from Chief Steven Nitah of the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation to Martin Haefele on February 11. He, too, is calling for some major adjusting of the schedules, along with some significant environmental reviews.

The original plan submitted by Deze Energy, for the extension of the Taltson transmission line, was years in the making and review and approval process. A route adjustment, particularly over a major body of water, and through front yards, cannot be sloughed through the mill in less than three weeks. This is a serious and significant modification to the project, and must be given its due process, however long this turns out to take. The economic benefits to Deze Energy cannot so casually be traded off against the major negative effects the power line will have on those living and working in the Reliance area.

Safety and well-being

Regardless of season, the majority of all traffic to and from the Reliance area is done by air. Small planes take off and land on ice or water, depending upon time of year.

There is a fairly strong current, from the Lockhart River, that runs through the gap of water between Maufelly and Fairchild Points. Even in mid-winter, the presence of the current is evident. It is common for the area surrounding the gap to be covered by ice as late as July 1. Depending upon wind direction, ice, and open water, planes can be very limited in where and when they can land and take off. Particularly at the beginning and ending of summer, the gap between the points is the only available route for planes coming and going. The winds are frequently from the west, which makes the gap the primary “runway” in the area. To run a power line over the gap is a needless and risky undertaking that can either prevent emergency travel or cause horrible accidents.

Resources available to affected individuals

Those who are most affected by this proposal and the resulting review process now underway have virtually no resources available to them. They are eking out a living on the land, or operating very small seasonal businesses on low margins. Those who are affected don’t even likely know who to contact for assistance, or how to find – and then pay for - a consultant to write an intervention on their behalf. These are the people with most to lose. They are stacked up against major resources with full legal assistance, in a process that supposedly protects their interests.

They cannot contact their local MLA or Member of Parliament – no politician would ever consider being put in a position whereby he or she could be perceived to be influencing an environmental review – and rightly so. But because of the lack of availability of any assistance to a politician’s constituent, there needs to be some means by which the best interests of the vulnerable interested parties are treated fairly. It would be very easy for them to be steam-rolled by “the system”.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Northwest Territories covers 1.17 million square kilometers, and has a population of only 40,000 residents. With all this space and with so few people, why could it conceivably be necessary to run a high-capacity power transmission line through an area where it would have such a negative impact?

Any transmission line crossing Great Slave Lake should do so underwater, regardless of cost. Furthermore, the entry and exit points for the line in the water should be on the south and north shores of the lake, and there should be no towers running along either Maufelly or Fairchild points. Fisheries and Oceans have given every indication that they would support an underwater solution. The young family of Roger Catling, amongst others, should not be subjected to the potential health hazards of a high capacity power line a few meters over their heads.

The schedule for reviewing this project modification needs to be greatly extended. Due diligence has NOT been done. The repercussions are too big to allow only 18 days for interested parties to digest their situation, and formulate and present a submission substantive enough to be seriously considered in your review, in some cases in order to preserve their very existence.

With only very limited other resources available to the affected parties, it falls to you – the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board – to ensure you fully understand and consider the impact on those who would have this ugly, noisy, intrusive structure being built in their tiny corner of the world. You must weigh the relative effect on their lives, versus the relative inconvenience and cost impact to Deze Energy. A major justification for your very being, remote from and unaffected by potentially interfering politicians, is to provide a system that fairly protects the interests of all, including the “little guy”.

I do appreciate that the system allows me to express my thoughts and concerns to your review board.

Sincerely

Peter Dunn