

# No health danger . . . Board should not expand terms of reference

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showed electrical annoyances for people under the line was "virtually nil" and that almost all types of farm operations could be conducted around the line. Ralston added irrigation could also be carried out in the vicinity of the line. Ralston stated that any farm practices in the area of the line, thought weren't safe wouldn't be allowed. He said he knew of only one case where hydro tower has been damaged during farm operations. In that incident a farmer tried to drive through the tower and smashed his tractor headlight and damaged two tower diagonals.

Ralston told the hearing that tests had shown there were no physical effects on linemen doing bare handed work on hydro corridor lines and that the strength of the electric field would be 10 times greater for the linemen as compared for people and cattle under the line. The witness then delved into the details of a medical report compiled by Ontario Hydro based on studies conducted by both Russia and United States. The studies dealt with the medical effects of power lines on people working under the lines. Admitting that the studies show more investigation is needed Ralston stated that studies thus far indicate there aren't any harmful effects on people working under the lines. He explained that Russian studies are based on a clearance between the ground and lines of only 24 to 26 feet and that no effects have been reported. Ralston stated he is familiar with health effects studies because they come into his work every day and that all investigations indicate there is "virtually nothing to worry about as far

as people are concerned." He explained that in 1975 Russian and American officials held discussions surrounding their health findings and concluded that medical effects on linemen working on 750 KV to 1150 KV could practically be disregarded. Ralston suggested since there was no dangers for men working on the line there was nothing to worry about for farmers or cattle under the line. Under cross examination, conducted by Interested Citizens Groups Lawyer Robert Smith, Ralston admitted the best route for a hydro line would avoid heavy icing areas. Ralston conceded Ontario Hydro is aware that there is an area of heavy icing just south of Orangeville but contended that his design group had taken the worst possible icing conditions into account when it chose the route. He added all lines built in southern Ontario are designed for maximum icing conditions. The witness also admitted that the highest type of farm machinery taken into account during Hydro's studies was 14 feet. Smith stated the hearings had already heard testimony about some farm equipment that reached a height of 22 feet and contended there could be great dangers for people standing on top of these kinds of equipment. Ralston admitted someone on top of equipment this high might notice shocks. Smith noted most of Hydro's tests had been conducted in labs and that the best possible tests would be those carried out directly under power lines. Ralston agreed, but noted there hadn't been any harmful effects reported anywhere for people working under 500 KV power lines.

In his final summation before the Environmental Hearing Board Ontario Hydro counsel Bruce Campbell said the Board shouldn't look at anything outside the terms of reference as set down by the Minister of Energy for the Board's investigation of the 500 KV hydro corridor from Bradley Junction to Georgetown. The Board was ordered earlier this year by Energy Minister Dennis Timbrell to examine 22 miles of the proposed hydro corridor from a point just north of Ballinacree to a spot west of Shelburne to see if the Board could come up with any modifications. Campbell said the Interested Citizens Group maintains there was a misunderstanding between the citizens representatives and Timbrell concerning the terms of reference. He noted that even if Hydro got the final go ahead now for the 500 KV line there was no way it could be completed until 1978.

He told the hearing board that hydro had properly assessed the impact on farm land and the natural environment when they chose the route. Campbell noted they chose to cross over farm land as opposed to fine recreational land, which the Bruce to Essa line would have crossed. Hydro's lawyer stated that all studies indicated it was possible to continue farm operations in the area of the towers and that only a small amount of farm land would be taken out of production because of the lines. He reminded the board Hydro evidence had shown there were no harmful medical effects for people working under the lines and that livestock isn't effected by the lines either. Campbell stated Hydro concluded lines were less of an encroachment when they cross agricultural land and that the farmers would be well compensated for the loss of their land to towers. He added Hydro would try to minimize the damage to farm lands caused by line construction. Evidence, he said, showed a 40 foot clearance was more than adequate but that Hydro was planning a 45 to 47 foot clearance and farm activities could continue under the lines as any other place. Compensation by Hydro for the farmers took into account possible loss of property value he said, and that if no

agreement could be reached between the farmer and Hydro then an impartial tribunal would settle the dispute fairly. He added there is no evidence to show power lines reduce property value, especially when the land is used for farming. Campbell read parts of a letter to the Board complimenting hydro on their excellent work on the Bradley Junction to Georgetown route planning. He said the letter, from Rick Symmes of the Ontario Sierra Club, congratulated Hydro on the fact that when spot-checked their data concerning the route was reliable. Mr. Symmes' letter said the Sierra Club thought the loss of agricultural land would be minimal and that the infusion of capital from compensation would increase farm productivity. The letter also questioned the competence of a farmer who couldn't continue agricultural operations within 50 feet of the power corridor. He produced another letter, this one from the Ontario Federation of Naturalists, which was in support of Hydro's selection of the route. The Naturalists letter stated there was no need for an

independent study of the route. Campbell said he was amazed at the few number of mistakes made by Hydro during its studies of the corridor and those that were made were insignificant. To citizen group lawyer Robert Smith's charge that Hydro witnesses weren't scientific Campbell answered he thought the witnesses had been frank. He said that when dealing with questions of environmental impact there may not be yes and no answers and there frequently wasn't a clear cut answer. Campbell concluded there wasn't enough time for the Board to turn in an interim report while Hydro prepares data on all possible routes. The citizens group wants an interim report on evidence on all alternative routes. He added there wouldn't be time for public participation from citizens in the areas of alternative routes. Campbell noted the Solandt Commission said it's a bad idea to narrow ones view to examining individual routes and he cautioned the Board against further delaying the construction of corridor by submitting an interim report.

A resolution from the Town of Newcastle which asked that school boards be required to levy and collect future school taxes was filed by the finance committee of Halton Hills council Monday night, although members agreed in principle with the intent of the Newcastle resolution.

Much as I hate paying school taxes, we'd only be duplicating costs already borne by the town, said committee chairman Harry Levy.

Councillor Pat McKenzie agreed although noting it nettled him when board of education taxes sent the mill rate spiralling—and council takes the blame.



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