

Esquering steers course in power line controversy

Esquering Council has drawn sharp criticism not only from neighboring municipalities but also from some of its own ratepayers after presenting a brief to the Solandt Commission last Wednesday night in which it endorsed as the better of two alternatives Ontario Hydro's proposed middle route for its 500 KVA power transmission line.

Representatives of the township councils of Esquering, Chinguacousy and Toronto Gore, the Coalition of Concerned Citizens, private businesses and individual ratepayers presented briefs or addressed the Commission at a special open meeting at Central Peel High School. The two man commission headed by Dr. Solandt was appointed by the Ontario government to consider the implications of the Pickering to Nanticoke power line.

The middle route, favored by Ontario Hydro passes through the extreme northern end of Chinguacousy and through a southerly portion of Erin and Eramosa, but does not affect Esquering. The southern route would pass directly through Esquering south of Georgetown somewhere between Five and 10 Sideroad, then swing north running parallel with a north-south line which may split the township's Fourth Concession, passing through many properties.

Howitt speaks
Speaking on behalf of the township, Councillor Dick Howitt, who serves on both council and planning board received a cool reception from the predominantly Chinguacousy audience when he said Esquering supports Hydro's middle route. "It may seem like a selfish attitude, but the council of Esquering was put there to look after the concerns of Esquering residents and nobody else's," he explained.

He claimed council was not aware Hydro was considering an alternate route to the south until the Solandt Commission hearings commenced in August. Council has not been consulted by Ontario Hydro at any time, he said.

Howitt's explanation failed to convince Mrs. Peter Branch whose property on Lot 1 Con. 10 south of Georgetown would be cut in half by the alternate southern route.

"You haven't bothered to inform us. This map is in your township office. How do you explain this?" she asked.

Later Mrs. Branch's husband Peter said he was glad to hear Esquering Council favor the middle route.

"I understand our council has been taking the middle route in these courses of action ever since Confederation," he cracked. Mr. Branch expressed the hope Ontario Hydro officials will visit Esquering before they finalize a route for the north-south line.

Wants contact
Howitt said that since council has not been contacted about the north-south line he would not comment on it. However, he emphasized council would like to have more to say about it.

Dr. Solandt said he would not advise on the north-south line because municipalities have not been advised about it. In answer to a question from the floor, a Hydro spokesman said that the area where the north-south and alternate east-west lines would run together would probably require a right of way width of 775 feet. He said Hydro will suggest to Esquering Council that an area north of Lot 22, Con. 5 where there are now two gravel pits, might be a good crossing area.

The spokesman said it was Hydro policy to try to avoid historical sites such as the Scotch Block house on 10 Sideroad which is owned by Councillor Howitt. He later apologized for using Councillor Howitt's name.

Citizen's brief
Speaking for the Coalition of Concerned Citizens, Rick Symmes, a resident of Esquering recommended that Hydro be required to put in an interim plan to allow sufficient time for further study and a second look at putting the line across the parkway belt proposed in the Toronto-Centred Region plan. It is believed the parkway belt will be located just north of Highway 5. Symmes asked that if Hydro was to be given more land they first be required to prove they are making full use of all the right of ways they now have.

"Wherever it goes, the line should be in a more palatable form with a limit on the number of towers abreast," he said. Symmes said deliberations

should not generate into which of the three routes should be chosen.

"The route game is only a device to send neighbor against neighbor," he suggested.

Symmes said he has seen no decent evidence to show that the line should not go in the parkway belt. He charged that a previous government report indicating it would be difficult to run the line close to Toronto International Airport was largely influenced by Hydro.

"We're not trying to stop Hydro," he said. "We're just trying to show them better ways of doing it."

Chins brief
Chinguacousy township brief presented by Reeve Ed Williams called the middle route through the northern end of the township undesirable and suggested the ideal alignment for the power line would be in the parkway belt.

It also suggested that no matter what alignment is selected the use of underground cable is an absolute necessity through the Niagara Escarpment Area.

Toronto Gore township Reeve Melville Robinson said the division of his township by an artificial barrier, namely the alternate southern route would be a contradiction to the recommendations of his council and Peel County Council.

He recommended that the request for the alternate southern route be refused and that the future of his township not be determined by a Hydro transmission line proposal.

Reeve Robinson said his council considered not only the effects the line would have on Toronto Gore but also on neighboring municipalities.

Suggests corridor
Developer Bruce McLaughlin charged it is irresponsible to suggest there will be a major power blackout, if the line does not go through soon. Using slides to illustrate his idea, McLaughlin recommended a power corridor be kept across the province of Ontario parallel to Highway 401 for all services. He said he believes the Davis government is interested in the idea.

"Let's buy Hydro the time to do this thing right," he asked, as the audience applauded.

He condemned the proposed middle route and said he believes

the Ontario government intends to enlarge the Cataract area near where the line would pass into a provincial park.

A representative of the Chinguacousy Golf and Country Club called both east-west routes unsatisfactory. He said that if the middle route is permitted to destroy the valley in which his club is situated, he will be forced out of business.

Erin silent
Although Reeve Lloyd Lang and other members of Erin township council were present, they did not speak.

Erin township resident Jack Tizzard claimed a meeting between Hydro and Erin council is long overdue. He said people are only getting information on hearsay.

An unidentified Chinguacousy township woman summed up her feelings.

"If this is a contest, if Hydro wants people to be for them, they have to take people into consideration. Why blame the townships? If Hydro has known about this since 1963, why did they just reveal it now?" she asked.

"That's the best damn speech of the evening," a voice from the crowd shouted. "She's hit the nail right on the head."

In 12 hearings so far, Dr. Solandt has listened to briefs from 24 municipalities, 13 organized groups and 54 individuals across the province.

New pact for staff

A salary pact for caretakers and maintenance men working with the Halton County Board of Education was accepted by the Board at a meeting Thursday.

Caretakers' salaries range from \$3.45 an hour to start to \$3.69 effective July 1, 1972 and that jumps to a range of \$3.70 to \$3.94 per hour. Employees receive increases after three months, one year and 18 months.

Head caretakers will receive from \$3.79 to \$4.22 as of July 1, 1972 and from \$4.04 to \$4.47 as of July 1, 1973.

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