

War of attrition over new power corridors is going exactly as Hydro plans

The following is a copy of my submission to the Joint Hearings Board, regarding Ontario Hydro's proposed transmission corridor for eastern Ontario.

It's important to expose the inequitable manner in which these consultation meetings, Environmental Assessment Boards, and ultimately political final decisions, are reached. It's no contest from the very beginning:

I represent the Leeds County Conservator Society. I am a small business person from Seeleys Bay. I own land within sight of the proposed Ontario Hydro transmission towers. I attempt to adhere to a conservator ethic in my day-to-day life. In short, I try to avoid waste and I try to "tread softly" on the land. For these reasons, Ontario Hydro's mindless expansion programs deeply offend me.

The expansion offends me because it is unneeded, and therefore wasteful of our resources and our money. And it offends me because a procession of 186-foot steel towers through the lakes and forests of the Rideau region do not tread softly. I would encourage you gentlemen to get in your cars and drive over to the north shore road of Loughborough Lake and walk in to Spectacle Lake. Look around you and imagine the impact of that barren swath of land 420 feet wide punctuated with monstrous steel towers, dwarfing our natural environment — mocking it. Is this progress? Do the same just above Jones Falls where it will cut across the historic Rideau Canal.

Imagine the impact and you'll come away agreeing with the Parks Canada assessment — this route is unsuitable.

As for the need for this expansion, you seem to have accepted Ontario Hydro's contention that the line is needed. By now, Hydro's many lapses in foresight are a matter of record:

□ the completely unnecessary construction of the Lennox and Wesleyville oil-fired generating stations;

□ massively expensive heavy water plants that are being left to rust;

□ locking us into long-term uranium supply contracts at twice the current world price;

□ the construction of the \$12-billion Darlington Nuclear Station despite a current system overcapacity of 50 per cent.

I need hardly go on. I would only quote Dr. B. Rogers, counsel for the Ontario Energy Board, in his summation in June, 1982, of the energy board's hearings: "Hydro is plagued with excesses, including generating capacity, heavy water and heavy

water capacity, western Canadian coal, oil, uranium, nuclear fuel, land and possibly people."

In light of these surpluses, we need hardly be surprised that, instead of trying to conserve our electricity supplies, Hydro is spending \$30 million a year on its Go-Electric program trying to convince us to switch to electric heat in order to swallow Hydro's surpluses.

Hydro aggressively and with public money pushes supply (system expansion) rather than attempting to reduce demand (energy conservation). In fact, energy conservation is always the best investment economically and environmentally. For example, if all the houses in Ontario were retrofitted so that they consumed 50 per cent less energy than they do today we would save as much energy as nine Pickering-sized nuclear reactors can produce.

However, instead of responding to this reality, Ontario Hydro assaults our senses with an inane talking-furnace advertising campaign which cost you and I \$3.4 million last year.

Nowhere do we hear conservation. We are implored to use more and more electricity for space heating, despite the fact that it is both thermally inefficient and terminally expensive. What is more, the citizens and the countryside of eastern Ontario are being run over by Hydro's campaign to supply Ottawa householders with electric heat, the demand for which has been artificially created, despite the fact that the area is well served with cheaper natural gas.

You see, Ontario Hydro not only controls the supply, it manipulates the demand. It is in this light that we should view with skepticism its contention that this Eastern Ontario Transmission Corridor is necessary. Is it really necessary to the needs of the people or is it necessary in order to dump Hydro's embarrassing surplus nuclear capacity on the Ottawa market at the expense of the people and the environment of rural eastern Ontario?

Finally, I would like to vent my frustrations with the process by which this transmission line is being imposed on us. In 1976, at the time of the formulation of the Environmental Assessment Act, I was working as a consulting engineer. In that capacity, I participated in an Ottawa workshop sponsored by the government to discuss the new legislation.

At that time we were assured that in order to place both the proponents and intervenors in an assessment on an equal footing, that provision would be

made to fund legitimate citizens groups so that they might competently examine, research and respond to the invariably high-power and expensive stable of technical experts, public relations staff and community relations hacks that a giant utility such as Ontario Hydro assaults us with.

Well, the Ontario government has consistently defaulted on that promise. Both the Hydro Consumers' Association and the No Towers Federation have been denied funding and therefore denied fair and equitable participation in this process. How do you expect us to take time away from our families and our work and money from our pockets in order to protect our land from the intrusion of a giant utility with endless resources of full-time, highly-paid staff on expense accounts?

In fact, according to Ontario Hydro's newsletter, Hydroscope (Jan. 25, 1985), Hydro staff time for participation in public hearings for the first nine months of 1984 amounted to \$3.1 million dollars. The No Towers Federation budget for the past two years was \$400.

The result of such an inequitable mismatch is perfectly predictable. Two years ago, when my neighbors first heard of the intrusion of this transmission corridor, they reacted with alarm and indignation. They packed the South Crosby Township Hall to voice their concern at the first of Hydro's public participation meetings.

Two years later, powerless and discouraged, most of them have resigned themselves to the reality that you can't fight Hydro. The many meetings and the flood of information on top of their family responsibilities have successfully dissipated their energies, their idealism and their hopes.

You have to expect that this war of attrition goes exactly as Hydro plans. You, gentlemen of the Joint Hearings Board, and I, token citizen intervenor, are all pawns in Hydro's surplus consumption strategy. This last phase of the process, the Joint Hearings Board, serves only to further distance and insulate the Conservative government from an electrical utility out of control, from an unpopular and unfair decision to be imposed on the acquiescent conservative party supporters of eastern Ontario. The result is a foregone conclusion: Ottawa gets the power and we must live with the towers.

Paul Gervan
Seeleys Bay



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