

# Council opposes Calgary-Edmonton power lines on cost

## Bills could climb up to \$200 a year

BY JASON MARKUSOFF, CALGARY HERALD    SEPTEMBER 11, 2009



Calgary's mayor and aldermen say they don't see the need for costly Edmonton-to-Calgary electricity transmission lines that consumers will have to help pay for, unofficially joining the anti-line campaign of city-owned power firm Enmax.

**Photograph by:** Hannibal Hanschke, Reuters

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CALGARY - Calgary's mayor and aldermen say they don't see the need for costly Edmonton-to-Calgary electricity transmission lines that consumers will have to help pay for, unofficially joining the anti-line campaign of city-owned power firm Enmax.

Those critics included the alderman bidding to join some of the line's biggest promoters: Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who's running for the Stelmach Tories in next week's Calgary-Glenmore byelection.

"I haven't bought into the 'blackout, brownout' concern to raise fear among people," she said, referring to Energy Minister Mel Knight's warnings that without the major transmission network upgrades throughout the province, Albertans may have difficulty keeping their lights on in the future.

Since electricity customers will be made to pay for the new lines, Alberta Energy predicts the average residential customer will face \$96 a year in surcharges on their power bills once the lines are complete in 2017. Enmax CEO Gary Holden has put the number at \$200, an estimate the province dismisses.

However, Mayor Dave Bronconnier expressed worry about the "huge impact on southern Alberta ratepayers" when the issue came up at a committee meeting Thursday.

Others echoed Enmax's suggestion that the new plants it proposes to build will help negate the need for the new 500-kilovolt lines.

"I don't think they will fly, because I think we're going fast enough on regional generation," Ald. Jim Stevenson said.

Two years after a regulatory meeting on the transmission plan's need engulfed the Energy and Utilities Board in a spying scandal with disgruntled landowners, the Tories have proposed a law that lets the minister determine the need. Design work has already been ordered on the north-south lines, and the province held open houses around Alberta on the proposed network expansion.

"It's not about power lines or--as Enmax says--about local generation," said Alberta Energy spokesman Jerry Bellikka. "We need all these pieces to build a system that's going to work 20 years down the road."

Holden disagreed, saying the increased wind-power activity in southern Alberta and a surge in solar and other home-based cogeneration may further negate the need for more cross-province lines, and the question needs to be revisited.

"Why are we ushering this through with such a big hurry just at the moment when it seems costs are extremely large?" he said.

Enmax plans for a massive gas-fired generator near Calgary are subject of a lawsuit by other Alberta electricity firms, which say the city-owned firm isn't on a level playing field with independent competitors.

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