

MacIver issues ?not before the tribunal?

Amaranth Mayor Don MacIver relied in part on Health Canada and RETA (Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans) statistics as well as his own scientific knowledge in his presentation to the Environmental Review Tribunal on health effects of high-voltage overhead power lines.

Although his information was not fully debated, it was effectively ruled out of order as none of the appellant parties had led related evidence, and no expert witnesses had testified for the appellants, with respect to the issue. Apart from the hearing, DWP includes scientific studies that reach conclusions contrary to those cited by the mayor.

?The Tribunal notes that a presenter may only give evidence respecting the issues raised in the appeal. Some of the appeals, in referring to adverse health effects, do state that it is more likely than not that they are caused by a number of factors including stray voltage or electromagnetic fields.

?However, neither the Appellants' evidence nor their submissions in respect of the Health Test, have directly addressed this issue. Therefore, it is not entirely clear that this issue is before the Tribunal.

?However, assuming that it is, the Tribunal notes that no expert opinion evidence has been adduced to support the views expressed in Mayor MacIver's presentation. Consequently, the Tribunal finds that Mayor MacIver's evidence does not establish that serious harm to human health will be caused by high voltage transmission lines,? the tribunal says.

The mayor is a scientist employed by Environment Canada, and a co-winner of a Nobel Peace Prize. He ?was one of Canada's leading scientists working on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with former U.S. vice-president Al Gore,? CBC said in 2008.

Mayor MacIver was a presenter at the hearing on behalf of Amaranth Township, and not a party to it.

Part of his submission cited RETA on birth problems for women who work or live near high-voltage overhead power lines: 5.7 times expected risk of miscarriage; up to 2.5 times risk of throat defects for babies at birth; 1.7 times the risk of water-on-the-brain; up to 1.5 times normal risk of heart birth defects; and a correlation between EMF (electromagnetic radiation) and suicide and depression, among other things including property devaluation.

The mayor's presentation included this from Health Canada:

?Studies suggest that EMFs may be linked to a variety of health problems including leukemia, lymphoma, brain and nervous system cancers, melanoma, breast cancer, miscarriage, birth defects, Alzheimer's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease, depression and suicide.

?Anecdotally, EMFs have been associated with symptoms such as nausea, headache, fatigue, anxiety, dizziness, mental confusion, memory loss, sleep disturbance, itchy or burning skin sensations, and skin rashes,? his attribution to Health Canada reads in part.

?In June 2001, an expert scientific working group of International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO?IARC) reviewed studies related to the carcinogenicity of static and ELF electric and magnetic fields. Using the standard IARC classification that weighs human, animal and laboratory evidence, ELF magnetic fields were classified as possibly carcinogenic to humans based on epidemiological studies of childhood leukemia,? the Health Canada quote reads.

Mayor MacIver provided a detailed summary of uses and aspirations for the rail bed, and of the problems that the easement for and creation of the 230 kv overhead line could pose.

He did not speak in opposition to the wind farm, but only to reasons for burying the transmission line if the Dufferin Wind Power turbine approval should be upheld.

Mayor MacIver's full presentation is available on the Amaranth Township website.

What is RETA?

?RETA's mission is to ensure that whenever new high voltage transmission lines are built near schools, homes, daycare centres, hospitals and environmentally sensitive areas, they must be buried,? RETA says on its website.

It says adjacent property owners must be appropriately compensated if overhead transmission lines are approved.

By Wes Keller