

Swan Valley Star & Times

July 26, 2011

About Wowchuk's claims

In a story titled The NDP Position, which appeared in the Star and Times on June 14, Rosann Wowchuk, Minister Responsible for Manitoba Hydro, states that "The reality is that Manitoba families will not pay one cent for Bipole III; it will be paid for by export sales".

Ms. Wowchuk's claim, often voiced by Premier Greg Selinger as well, is at odds with sworn testimony given by Manitoba Hydro before Manitoba's Public Utilities Board on April 5, 2011. In this hearing, Manitoba Hydro confirmed that "it would not be accurate to suggest that the cost of the bipole will be built into the price of the product being sold into the American marketplace". To a follow-up query, "And indeed, the price received from the export market, from export market sales, will be a function both of the price you achieve through fixed-price export contracts as well as what the market suggests on any particular day?", Manitoba Hydro's answer was "That's correct". The rest of Ms. Wowchuk's letter is full of numbers that have no credibility. This debate has become a series of smoke and mirrors in the media domain that has turned into a numbers game that the public simply cannot follow and has absolutely no interest in trying to understand.

As Minister Responsible for Manitoba Hydro, Ms. Wowchuk needs to become familiar with Manitoba Hydro's intention with respect to how Bipole III will be paid for. As former Minister of Agriculture, she should also be aware of the disruption that the NDP Government's route choice for Bipole III will bring to the lives and operations of farmers in some of the most fertile soils in Manitoba and in one of the most favourable agro-climatic regions of western Canada. She owes more than that to some of the most productive and resourceful people in the province. Ms. Wowchuk owes every landowner whose land the line will pass by an apology and an announcement of a return to the east-side route that Manitoba Hydro had always intended for Bipole III until it was forced to look at the ridiculous west-side route as the only option. The NDP government also owes an explanation to every Manitoba ratepayer as to why it refuses to listen to virtually every outside expert and continues to bow to pressure from others who do not even reside in our country.

KAREN FRIESEN
Niverville