

February 18, 2010

Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board
200 Scotia Centre
Box 938, 5102 – 50th ave.
Yellowknife, NWT X1A 2N7

Attn. Mr. Alan Ehrlich & Mr. Martin Haefele

Re. Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project/The Reliance Adjustment

Dear Sirs;

As someone who has been fortunate enough to enjoy the Reliance area my entire life of 27 years, as a stakeholder who has interests in the area, and most importantly as a Canadian citizen, I am appreciative of the opportunity to express my opinions on the “Reliance Adjustment” to the proposed East Transmission Line option.

This does further beg the question however: Because the original East Transmission Line route was just as close to my property, then why was I not contacted and given the same opportunity to comment in regard to the overall project, and the three main routing options that were under consideration previously? Each of these three options will either have a direct or indirect impact on my future.

The Reliance Adjustment, which proposes to cross the narrows of Maufelly & Fairchild Points, raises numerous concerns, on a wide variety of issues that will be negatively impacted as a result of the externalities created if this proposal is allowed to proceed and become reality.

Wildlife Impacts:

In regard to the significant implications to wildlife, anyone can easily see from looking at a map of the area, the water pressure created from the Lockhart River has but one exhaust from Charlton Bay: That being the narrows between Maufelly & Fairchild Points. The result of this, is an area of open water which remains free of ice late into the winter and opens months early each spring. The result is a virtual magnet for wildlife in the area, and a vital migration route for waterfowl birds, and in particular Geese. Geese have been observed at these narrows every May for approximately two weeks, year after year consistently. The proposed route of the transmission line will cross directly over-top of this small area of open water. Despite being appreciative of the value of this event, I am not a Bird Biologist; however it does not take one to see the conflict that is caused by routing a transmission directly over where these birds land and take-off. Also, Barrenland Grizzly Bears are often observed crossing these same narrows, I believe they are listed as

an endangered species. Further, depending on the particular sub-species, Peregrine Falcons are an endangered species, or considered a species at risk. Maufelly & Fairchild points are key nesting grounds for these birds, as is clearly marked on GNWT wildlife maps. One would predict that given the extensive period of open water, that this area is just as critical to local species in the region as migratory birds, if not more so.

Air-Traffic Impacts:

Reliance is a Federally recognised Aerodrome, and a busy place for small aircraft traffic generally. It is a key logistical stopping point for travel to and from the barrenlands to the north and east of Reliance, and has been such since the early days of northern aviation. I would be interested to know if Transport Canada has been alerted to this new route adjustment through Reliance? I imagine they would have objections to placing a transmission line across a recognized marine "runway" for float plane traffic in summer and ski-plane traffic in winter. This is not allowable practice at other airports. From my perspective as a layman, not a professional pilot, I have landed and taken-off in aircraft at Reliance approximately three hundred times respectively, in my life. As such, I must state that this area can be very challenging for pilots as it is, due to the high hills around the immediate area which limits the available approaches, and when you add wind directions into the mix, it is clear to me that there are enough natural obstructions as it is. A transmission line between Maufelly and Fairchild Points would be hazardous to a point that could not be mitigated by hanging orange balls along it. Furthermore, a second key approach would be in conflict since at the back of Police Bay, the hills are especially high along the south and east sides. This makes the only available approach to the north of the bay, then a hard turn to the west for final approach into Police Bay. This only available approach for Police Bay, under the developer's proposal, is slated to have a transmission line across it.

Underwater Option:

I understand there has also been consideration for crossing the narrows between Maufelly & Fairchild Points using underwater cable. I object to this option for the following reasons: This is, in my opinion, just as visually offensive to the area, as it requires significant infrastructure on each shore. As well, the approximate same number of the large towers will still dot the landscape. And the aircraft approach at the back of Police Bay is still compromised. From another perspective, these narrows are a major feeding ground for Lake Trout and Arctic Grayling. My understanding is that small fish are particularly sensitive to noise. I would imagine that a transmission line of this magnitude would produce audible noise. These same fish are the ones that Trout and Grayling come to this area to feed upon. Without the feed fish, the rest of the eco-system will suffer a bottom-up effect; all the way to the Bald Eagles which I have personally witnessed catch Grayling out of the water here. Further, the fish are also an important source of sustenance for native & non-native people in the area.

Tourism Impacts:

The Reliance area, (and the entire East Arm) is a destination for tourists of all walks of life, from around the world. This area has long been known as a world-class sport fishing destination. A more recent trend of Eco-tourism is also alive and well. Boaters from all over Great Slave Lake have come to Reliance and the surrounding area for decades. Snowmobile adventurers come to this area in winter, as do Caribou and Musk-Ox hunters. There is absolutely no doubt that a transmission line will have adverse effects on the next generation of tourists coming to this area, as it simply is not congruent with the essence and spirit of their adventures. The tourism industry is often a difficult one in which to make a living, this transmission line routing would certainly add to the struggle that faces these small business owners in the area.

Historical Significance:

The historical value and significance of the Reliance area is also of substantial note and has dated back hundreds of years. Archaeological sites are abundantly concentrated in this area. The numerous European explorers who have used this area as a primary staging ground are well documented. They were followed by trappers and fur traders in prior generations. Then government presence began with the RCMP post at Reliance, and later a weather observation station. Perhaps in the future, it will be considered for a park office, as Reliance is the approximate geographic centre of the proposed National Park.

Proposed National Park:

As I am sure that everyone involved in this file is aware; the proposed East Arm National Park would be sliced in half by the Reliance Adjustment of the proposed transmission line, through a highly visible area of the park. Just because there is a "right-of-way" for power through the park boundaries, that does not excuse running it anywhere that suits the energy company. As this is exemplified with this proposed routing through one of the most spectacular and important areas within these boundaries, Reliance. Further, we must all take stock of why this area has been proposed for a National Park in the first place. Whether or not we all agree with the creation of a park, the reason these lands have been selected for this purpose is clear. It is simply a unique wonder of nature that is not rivalled by any other place in the world.

Spiritual Value:

There is no doubt I have been a fortunate individual, I have travelled to many places around the globe. However, I can say without hesitation that Reliance, and the surrounding area, ranks as the most special place in the world for me. It is this connection that I have had with Reliance for my entire life, for which I am *truly* fortunate. The only religion I adhere to is my connection with Nature, it is in this perspective that for me, *the Reliance area is my Mecca*. It is the most spiritual of all the lands I have experienced. Such would not continue if a transmission line slices through the middle of Reliance.

From my spiritual perspective, Reliance would die if it is “cut in half” by a transmission line.

Short-Sighted Solution:

All of the above must be taken with the understanding that I am acutely aware that the long-term economic viability of the NWT rests on making mining affordable & profitable for the entrepreneurs who risk a great deal to make these ventures happen so that we may all have jobs and prosperity. However I do not condone doing so in a short sighted manner, at the expense of future generations and their ability to enjoy the same places and benefits my family and I have enjoyed for generations. After all, it is the quality of life & lifestyle that keeps me here, not my job.

Through a quick, layman’s analysis, one can see the East Arm Route is the shortest over-land route for the transmission line, and therefore probably the least expensive. However, it is completely void of long term benefits. As the diamond mines have a short, finite life expectancy of another twenty years at the most, it makes long-term sense to develop this infrastructure in a manner that allows long-term users to benefit as well. For example, the West Transmission Route passes through six communities. Communities are not finite, they are here to stay (if we make them viable places to live). By having the Taltson contribute to their existing grid, they will have more reliable power, and hopefully cheaper power as well. Also, this route uses the existing road network, rather than blazing new roads through pristine wilderness and using expensive helicopters for construction and ongoing maintenance. On the surface, I disagree with the argument that says this route is too long to avoid major line-loss by the time it gets to the diamond mines. By the time this line reaches Yellowknife, the Snare & Bluefish lines can be connected to the Taltson to make a “loop” whereby Yellowknife would get far more reliable power, and the power would also be boosted enough to take it the rest of the way to the diamond mines.

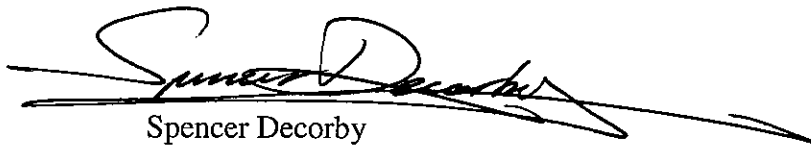
The Trans-Island Transmission Route would contribute to additional mining interests such as Avalon & Tyhee, whose estimated reserves in these locations are predicted to outlast the now known life expectancy of the diamond mines by decades. Also, in comparison to the East Arm, the Simpson Islands area is very benign, from geographic, animal, and people perspectives. In both of these cases, the transmission line would benefit long-term users and make less of a negative impact on the environment. Because long-term users would be included with these options, any additional capital cost increases associated with the construction of these routes, could be amortized over a longer period of time, and shared among more end users. Unfortunately, I do not believe the developer wants to properly weigh these merits, because the East Arm Route offers the quickest return on investment for them and their shareholders. I understand why. Companies are profit-driven, and however they can accomplish that with the quickest payback is almost always how they will want to conduct business. That is precisely why we have regulatory bodies: *to ensure companies conduct business with the long-term best interest of all affected parties in mind, not just their own.*

Fair & Due Process:

I ask that you consider all of what I have brought forward with the most serious of contemplation. This includes the alternative routes that I believe should be properly, fully, and transparently explored as I do not feel I have been given fair and due process to make comment. As I mentioned at the beginning of my letter, I have only ever been notified about, and invited to comment on the Reliance Adjustment. I would have been equally impacted as a property owner by the East Arm Route in its original form: the lines were to run just as close to my cabin as they are now, only they were to the south of me, not the north, but I was never contacted. Also, as someone who makes a living in the north, I know all of the originally proposed main routes would have an impact on me one way or the other. Further, I have not been given adequate time, or information to make my best submission to you today regarding the Reliance Adjustment. Therefore, I ask, as a party with a vested interest in the future of the NWT in general, and under the rights afforded to me as a Canadian citizen, that this entire process starts over at square one, in a complete and transparent manner, as it has been fundamentally flawed to the core. In the future, please govern Deze Energy with the best interests of *all* residents of our territory in mind. And in the mean time, please consider me as firmly Against the Reliance adjustment.

As a citizen of Canada, and life-long resident of the Northwest Territories, I must state that *our* Reliance area is a very rare sort of commodity indeed. It is that very pristine spirit that captures both the imagination and the reality of what our primary role is in keeping us in our stead with our global peers & viewers. This rare earthly commodity is what identifies us to the world with the very essence of what *our land* means to us as Northern Canadians. Because the decisions of today effect tomorrows 'landscape' it is incumbent on us to ensure that we engage our long-term vision of preserving our most irreplaceable heirlooms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Spencer Decorby', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Spencer Decorby