

Nostalgia doesn't help impoverished east side

By Bryan Schwartz and Elijah Harper

THE laws of Manitoba require that environment issues always be considered alongside economic and social development. David Schindler's anti-development article (Keep east side pristine, Free Press, Jan. 11) article makes no mention of the potential of development in the "pristine" east side to restore hope and achieving an improved quality of life for the impoverished people of the area.

There is a lawful, rational and principled approach to environment issues. It involves focusing on principles and facts, not ideology or partisan politics. It requires consultation with the people involved. It makes findings based on science to identify real environmental risks. Then it adjusts plans to overcome them.

Schindler instead presents a scare scenario based on much different developments elsewhere and in the past. The "imaginary horrible" he conjures up is not based on the power line itself, but other developments it "might" attract. In the meantime, he ignores any impact of a longer line on the west side.

Instead of calling for thorough expert study and public input followed by proper planning, he invokes his own nostalgic recollections of visits to the area. His nostalgia apparently is untempered by the staggering levels of poverty and ill-health among the human beings who live there.

The "children and grandchildren" of the people of this province will not thank this government for ignoring the expressed wishes of the vast majority of elected First Nations leaders in the area to explore development and potentially share in its benefits.

They will not be grateful for a waste of hundreds of millions or dollars that could have been spent on health, education or the environment itself; or on simply freeing taxpayers to look after their own families.

The west side alternative would be much longer, so there could well be more direct adverse environmental impact. It is beyond doubt that on an annual basis, large amounts of renewable energy would be lost in transmission along the much longer west side route.

Schindler encourages the people of this province to support a decision that appears to be drastically inferior on all grounds, including environmental protection, and pre-empts any serious and credible consultations and studies.

The rule of law and reason require that the government instead unplug its ears and open its mind.

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