

# City to give back power line money

by **PHILLIP WOOLGAR**

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City of St. Albert staff cut a \$300,000 cheque last week for the provincial government, returning money that was earmarked for a power line relocation project.

That sets a temporary resolution to months of debate about whether the relocation is immediately necessary and affordable.

Of the \$1.1 million that would be needed for the recommended plan to put the lines along Ray Gibbon Drive, \$750,000 was funded by power transmission company AltaLink, as well as the province.

AltaLink told City staff they would contribute \$450,000, leaving \$350,000 for St. Albert to pay.

While there is no guarantee the province

and AltaLink will continue to make the funds available, Scott Schreiner, communications manager for AltaLink, said the money will be there for whenever city council decides to fund the rest of the project.

“AltaLink is absolutely committed to relocating that line,” Schreiner said. “We’re hopeful St. Albert will find a way to move forward.”

The initiative was added to the City’s list of business cases in December, when Mayor Nolan Crouse said the project should be documented as unfunded.

He said there isn’t enough money available for the project.

The AltaLink power lines are accused of killing hundreds of birds in mid-flight, as they are located in an environmental wetland along Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park. The birds

are blindsided by the thin wires, often causing death.

“We identified this location as a highest risk location for birds,” Schreiner said. “The aesthetics of the park, the birds and the ability to relocate the lines makes this something that AltaLink wants to move forward with.”

Dean Screpnek, general manager of corporate and financial services with the City, said the province would also likely be willing to fork over the funds in the future.

“My understanding is that both AltaLink and the province will revisit the move,” Screpnek said. “There was nothing concrete, just a notion of willingness.”

Money did not have to be returned to AltaLink, as they said they would make the money available with a commitment by the City.