

Kevin McA  
kmc@stalbort.  
greatwest.ca

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## ENVIRONMENT FILE

### Power lines priced

Burying the Big Lake power line could cost up to \$6 million, according to the city.

St. Albert city staff briefed members of the Environmental Advisory Committee last week on the city's plans to move a controversial power line near Big Lake. The 138-kilovolt-line, which currently runs between a lagoon west of Ray Gibbon Drive and the lake, has been blamed for hundreds of bird deaths and is considered by some to be an eyesore in Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park. Environmental groups, provincial parks officials and the Hole family have called for the line to be moved or buried.

About 25 people piled into the boardroom July 16 at the St. Albert RCMP headquarters for a briefing on the line given by city environmental co-ordinator Leah Jackson.

Three routes are under consideration, Jackson said. The first, preferred by AltaLink, would move the line so it follows the northeast shore of the lagoon instead of the southwest. The second, suggested by the city, would follow Ray Gibbon Drive. These routes cost about \$850,000. Route three would run along Riel Drive at a cost of \$2.4 million. Burying the line would cost \$5-to-\$6 million. Alberta Parks has already contributed \$300,000 to moving the line, while AltaLink has pledged \$400,000.

Committee chair Jason Cooke said he found the Ray Gibbon Drive route to be a reasonable compromise between cost and bird protection. "If money were no object anything could be on the table," he said, regarding the burial option. Burying the line would mean building two sub-station-sized cooling units at either end of it, he noted, and could carry substantial mainte-

nance costs.

Coun. Carol Watamaniuk acknowledged the cost of burial, but said it was the only option that made aesthetic sense for the park. "It's an eyesore, not to mention that it kills birds." She said the city could probably find the money to bury the line through provincial grants, adding she would not support a tax increase to pay for this option.

The committee will meet with AltaLink officials on July 30 to learn more about the line, and is expected to make a recommendation to the city on it later this year.

