

# Letter to the Editor

## Re: Edmonton Journal Letter to Editor

Re. "We still have power to think along new lines"

The Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) wishes to address inaccurate information that appeared in a Letter to the Editor from B. Bocock on October 24<sup>th</sup>.

The AESO is the not-for-profit organization that is responsible for planning the provincial transmission system to ensure this important infrastructure keeps pace with the growing demand for power. Our mandate is to connect any and all generation that is approved by the Alberta Utilities Commission, regardless of the type or location of the generation.

In order to ensure a reliable transmission system, the AESO must build a robust, unconstrained transmission grid to carry electricity from where it is produced to where it is needed across the entire province. Without a strong transmission grid to supply reliable, competitively priced generation, consumers in certain parts of the province will continue to be held captive - in terms of price and supply - to one or only a few providers.

The AESO takes a very prudent, practical and balanced approach to forecasting growth on the system. AESO engineers, economists and planners analyze electricity consumption patterns in every area of the province and integrate data from multiple sources including the Conference Board of Canada, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the interconnection requests we have received from our customers to determine where the demand for electricity will grow, where and how much generation is required to meet that demand, and what additional transmission infrastructure is required. That information is compiled in the AESO's *Long-term Transmission System Plan*.

The Heartland project is urgently required to reinforce the backbone of the electricity grid, support local demand in the Heartland area and supply electricity to oilsands development and associated industries in northeast Alberta, including Fort McMurray. The AESO began consulting on the need for the project in 2007. It was identified as one of four Critical Transmission Infrastructure projects and the need for the project was approved by the Government of Alberta under the *Electric Utilities Act* in the fall of 2009.

Although the recession negatively affected economic growth in Alberta, the economy is recovering and is anticipated to return to historical growth patterns within two years. Investment in the oilsands and pipelines is also expected to continue to drive strong economic growth over the next decade and beyond.

The AESO's 2009 Forecast shows growth of over 95 per cent from 2009 to 2019 in the northeast region of the province, nearly doubling over the next decade. This is the equivalent to growth of almost two times the size of the City of Edmonton over the next 10 years. The future transmission system of the province must be robust enough to interconnect these new generation facilities and supply the increased demand.

Albertans rely on a strong transmission grid to power our homes, businesses and industries, to encourage generation developers to invest in Alberta, and to ensure reliable, competitively priced electricity. With no major upgrades to the backbone of the system in over two decades, significant upgrades are required to meet the province's future energy requirements and continue to ensure a reliable system.

As the organization that manages Alberta's power grid to keep the lights on for Albertans, the AESO has an accountability to provide factual information about the electricity industry and how it works. We encourage you to visit our public engagement website for more information about the need for transmission upgrades in our province. Please go to [www.poweringalbertans.com](http://www.poweringalbertans.com) to learn more.

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