

Possible Hydro project raises residents' concerns



By Brock Weir

A possible new hydro project which would help power increased services on GO Transit's Barrie Rail Corridor is leaving residents in the St. John's Sideroad and Bayview Avenue area seeing red.

At issue are stakes that have appeared in the hydro corridor in the area's northeast quadrant, outlining new power lines just 18 feet beyond their back fences, much closer to their properties than hydro lines already in place.

Concerned resident Andrea Kariotis first noticed the stakes, visible from her back fence, a few weeks ago and tells The Auroran when she saw the sticks were earmarked for 'hydro?', her first thought was, 'You've got to be kidding me.'

After some consultation with her neighbours and making calls to Hydro One, Metrolinx and area representatives, Ms. Kariotis has been leading the charge calling for an immediate halt to the project.

'It is not acceptable,' she said, pointing to the stake nearest her fence. 'It is way too close.'

Ms. Kariotis says she has a number of concerns about the hydro project, including health effects from living so close to even more hydro lines, noise pollution from the hum of the lines and any other associated infrastructure, and property values.

'If I want to sell my house, no one is going to want to come and buy a house with this hydro tower there,' she said. 'The [tower] that is already there is there, and I get it, but I don't want to sit on my deck and have a coffee while looking at a pole. I want to see the greenery.'

Since Ms. Kariotis has raised alarm bells, several

neighbours have joined her in the fight and they have collected dozens of names in a petition for both Hydro One and Metrolinx, and they also plan to formally make their objections to local lawmakers as a delegate to the July 16 meeting of Council.

‘If I don’t fight for it and nothing happens, I can’t say I didn’t try,’ she said. ‘We’re going to tell Council what our concerns are, that we don’t want this to happen. Where else are they looking to put in these towers? Is there another place, or are there more places? Maybe this place is the easiest because it runs through where they want it to go and the hydro tower is already there, so maybe it is the easiest and cheapest, but we don’t care if it is the cheapest; we object and we don’t want it.’

Hydro One says they are in the ‘early stages’ of exploring options available to ‘relocate some of its key equipment that serves area customers, including wires and accompanying structures’ at Metrolinx’s request.

‘As part of this upcoming project, Hydro One crews were in site in Aurora near Pinnacle Trail during the month of June to gather local site information and complete staking,’ Hydro One spokesperson Alicia Sayers tells The Auroran. ‘Staking is used to help us identify design options as well as safe construction clearances on Hydro One’s existing right-of-way.’

‘Hydro One believes in building relationships and working together with communities that we serve and we will be reaching out to residents in the coming months on this future work that we are conducting at the request of Metrolinx. Prior to engaging with the community, Hydro One needs to gather information to develop options for the relocation of this existing equipment. This will then be shared as part of our community consultation.’

Area residents, however, said they believe they should have been kept in the loop from the very beginning. They have outlined their concerns and communications with Hydro One in a letter to Council and shared with media.

‘We were told there is in fact a Hydro One project initiated as a result of the Metrolinx plan for electrification of the Barrie Rail corridor,’ Ms. Kariotis writes. ‘To meet Metrolinx power demands, Hydro One may be required to relocate multiple existing distribution posts that come in conflict with the Metrolinx plan. Since the project is in the preliminary design stage, Hydro One is reviewing construction methods and location options for relocating the affected infrastructure. That includes exploring the locations along the existing right of way between St. John’s Sideroad and Mulock Drive.’

‘Our foremost concern is if we had not noticed the staking activity behind our backyards and started to ask questions: when was Hydro One going to tell us about this infrastructure relocation project? Now

that we know more about it, our list of concerns is growing, especially, as stated above, this is a potential additional layer of electrical lines close to our homes in addition to the existing high voltage transmissions lines. At this point, we have the impression that the need for community involvement and consultation is not being considered as important to Hydro One.?