



ALBERTA OMBUDSMAN

News release

July 6, 2007

Alberta Ombudsman Investigating Alberta Energy and Utilities Board

*Edmonton...*The Alberta Ombudsman, G. B. (Gord) Button, announced today that he will immediately commence an investigation on his own motion of the administrative actions of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (AEUB) in hiring and deploying private investigators to monitor and report on the activities of interested parties attending the Rimbey hearings on the proposed 500 kV power transmission line between Edmonton and Calgary. This investigation will focus on the AEUB's decision to hire private investigators and the mandate given, the information reported back to the AEUB, how that information was used and its impact on the administrative fairness of the process. He will issue a public report including any findings and recommendations at the conclusion of his investigation. The Alberta Ombudsman advises he is aware of the parallel investigation being conducted by the Information and Privacy Commissioner and is confident the two investigations will complement each other to clarify what took place and how it impacted the fairness of this process.

The Alberta Ombudsman is in the best position to conduct this investigation as he is an officer of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The Alberta Ombudsman operates independently from any part of the Alberta government and individual elected officials. The authority for the Alberta Ombudsman to investigate on his own motion is pursuant to Section 12(2) of the *Alberta Ombudsman Act*.

In addition, the Alberta Ombudsman announced that he is monitoring the ongoing approval process by the AEUB for the proposed transmission line. He has received several complaints about the AEUB's handling of the application and the approval and review process. Mr. Button advises he was preparing to launch a systemic review into this process but has now been advised of two separate decisions made by the Alberta Court of Appeal which has granted leave to appeal to affected parties on various issues related to this matter. The nature and extent of the issues which would be subject of an Ombudsman investigation are similar to those which are integral to the AEUB processes to be reviewed by the Court of Appeal. As a result, the Alberta Ombudsman will not commence a review of the processes and procedures of the AEUB with respect to the matters for which the Court of Appeal has granted leave to appeal.

Mr. Button explained, "Once the decision of the Court of Appeal is known, I will determine whether further review or investigation of the AEUB's actions by the Alberta Ombudsman is warranted. Any investigation would focus on the administrative fairness of the process established and implemented by the AEUB."

For more information on the Alberta Ombudsman visit www.ombudsman.ab.ca.

-30-

Media enquiries may be directed to:

Glen Resler
Director Corporate Services
Alberta Ombudsman
Phone: (780) 427-2756

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.