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Use of right-of-way meets safety and environmental standards
EMF levels drop at ROW edge

VANCOUVER, BC –When the British Columbia Transmission Corporation (BCTC) files its regulatory application seeking approval to reinforce and upgrade the transmission system from the Lower Mainland to Vancouver Island it will recommend constructing overhead lines on the existing right-of-way on Galiano and Salt Spring Island.

Gulf Island residents wanted to have alternatives to overhead lines considered and proposed use of submarine cables around the island.

BCTC is hosting a community meeting to review the route assessment criteria which includes the public utility's interest in considering local interests with its requirement to provide reliable, low-cost electricity service to all ratepayers in the province.

"We listened carefully to the views expressed by Gulf Island residents and, with community input, we were able to identify several route options which were carefully considered," says Dennis Maniago, Vice President, System Planning and Asset Management. "In this case, we have determined that building overhead lines on the existing right-of-way meets all technical, safety and environmental standards and does not unfairly burden rate payers, and this will be the route we propose in our regulatory application."

In addition to routing issues, local residents had expressed concerns about the electric magnetic fields (EMF) that would be produced by new higher voltage overhead lines. The technical review of the recommended option demonstrated that EMF levels would decrease at the edge of the right-of-way and are well within safe limits endorsed by the World Health Organization.

Concern about EMFs has led health authorities to establish safe exposure levels for power line projects. BCTC strictly adheres to existing national and international safety guidelines set by health authorities. These guidelines are based on current knowledge and developed to protect everyone in the population.

The Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project is a plan to replace and upgrade existing 138 kV transmission facilities in the Southern Corridor (including overhead transmission lines, submarine cables and AC/DC converters) which are 35 to 50 years old. This infrastructure is nearing the end of its reliable life and must be replaced by the fall of 2008 to meet current and projected electricity demand on the southern Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island. The upgrade also reinforces the reliability of the entire transmission system ensuring safe, reliable power for all B.C. users.

- 30 -

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