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# FAST FACTS

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## McFadyen's Bloated Numbers Make For Murky Bi Pole III Debate

**A**s recorded in Hansard, since the beginning of the Legislative session on April 12, there have been ongoing relentless attacks, on Hydro, the West route for Bipole 3, and the government. The attacks, mainly by Conservative leader Hugh McFadyen, have centred on the costs of the West route, claiming that it will cost \$11,748 per family. His erroneous claim distorts the fact that it's only the extra costs of the West route that should be considered. The Premier and the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro have refuted these charges, but the media continues to disregard their arguments and the attacks continue. Mr. McFayden recently debated Premier Selinger on CJOB radio and kept repeating the \$11,748 figure, without explaining how he arrives at such an inflated number. Now there are billboards and a website that spread the same specious message.

It is legitimate to debate the issue of the West route vs the East route on rational factual grounds, but it is not legitimate to base such a debate on unsubstantiated claims and purposeful distortion. Letters in the WFP from Mr. Laliberte and the East-side Coalition, of which Mr. Laliberte is a member, further muddy the waters.

The Conservative Party's preference for the East route and its attacks on the plans by Manitoba

Hydro and the government for the West route have become a *cause célèbre* and obviously this issue will be a major plank in their campaign in the forthcoming provincial election. Rather than just being a debate, this matter has degenerated into a propaganda war -- and as in all wars, truth has become a frontline casualty.

It is not that the basic facts on this matter are difficult to obtain. All the data that follow were obtained from Manitoba Hydro, either from their website or from specific inquiries to the corporation, and additional calculations were made based on these Manitoba Hydro data.

As of 2007, the total extra cost of the West route was approximately \$650,000,000. This difference was based on the higher cost of the construction of the West side arising from the 500 extra kilometres (\$410 million) and the amount of the line losses coming off the extra length of the West side (\$232 million). No one ever debated these amounts.

Recently all the estimates have changed because of increases in construction costs. The \$410 million difference in cost for the extra 500 kilometres has increased to \$455 million. The \$232 million difference for line losses has remained the same. The total difference between the two routes is now approximately \$690 million when extra apparatus costs are factored in.



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## *FAST FACTS continued ...*

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As mentioned, for some years, the \$650 million figure was correctly used by critics, but some now claim, without explanation, that this figure has jumped to over \$1 billion. The \$1 billion figure continues to erroneously be used by many commentators, including the media.

Then in September 2010, McFayden raised this already bloated figure to \$1.75 billion, with the additional claim that this amounted to \$7,000 per Manitoba family. The claim that the *difference* between the two routes would equal \$1.75 billion is incomprehensible given that at the time, the cost of the *total* line was only \$1.1 billion.

On March 31, 2011 the revised costs for the West Route were announced and the extra cost for the West Route, calculated from Hydro data, was confirmed at \$690 million.

Despite this official confirmation, on April 1, 2011, the Conservatives announced that the extra costs for the West Route would be \$2.94 billion or \$11,748 per Manitoba family. This new bloated figure is more than 4 times the actual extra cost of \$690 million. No explanation was offered on how the Conservative Party arrived at the figure. The East Side Coalition has now distanced itself from the Conservative position and is sticking with the \$1 billion estimate which, wrong as it may be, is not as outrageous as the Conservatives' figure.

Since all these data are readily available, it is certain that the Conservative Party must have the correct information, otherwise the party apparatus would be hopelessly incompetent. Hence, if they have the correct information, what is behind their concerted barrage of deliberate misinformation to the media, public and in the Legislature? To add to this mix of distortion they at first included unsubstantiated leaks (later to be proven baseless) on the cost of the West route that were apparently sent to them by a disgruntled employee at Hydro.

Unbelievable as it may seem, instead of conducting a debate based on the legitimate advantages and disadvantages of the West route and the East route, the Conservative Party appears to be conducting a propaganda war on both Hydro and the government based on outright fabrication and deliberate distortion, with the objective of bringing about confusion and misinformation in the public on a major public policy. This is irresponsible in the extreme – all for the sake of partisan politics. This is in the worst tradition of the Tea Party element in the Republican Party in the USA.

Such a tragedy to see this tradition in full bloom in Manitoba.

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