

## **Transparent Assessment of Interprovincial Crossings**

During the recent round of consultations a question of the weighting system arose. The question is reasonable. The answer was very surprising. It appears that assigning weights will be done only after all of the data has been collected. Only then is the spread amongst all of the corridors, for a given criterion, known. The experts believe that a small spread ought to be given a small weighting because that criterion could contribute little to distinguishing amongst the various corridor options.

If nothing changes, that is what will happen. This may be the technically correct way of assigning weighting factors. The major problem is that the 'winning candidate corridor' will be the result of a rating system not known in advance. The eventual recommendation will be exposed to the suggestion that it was the result of manipulation through the weighting factors applied to obtain a desired choice.

There is another facet of the rating system which should be examined by the public. This is our 'modern' habit of reducing criteria which are inherently descriptive in nature (e.g. impact on communities, or the environment) to a number. Once all criteria can be rendered numerical, 'weighting factors' can be applied across the board and a mathematical crank turned. This appears to make the evaluation process objective. Certain criteria are 'measurable' in the sense that a number results - capital costs or time (distance, fuel) saved for instance. I do not believe that the other impacts mentioned above are adequately dealt with by estimating the number of fish or salamanders or even the number of residential units affected.

The consultations have so far not focussed on the corridor rating system. The study should yield a recommendation that is as objective as it is humanly possible to make it. More important is that the process be transparent. It is already known that the eventual recommendation will not please everyone. The choice cannot be determined by warring petitions. Only through a choice-making process that is fully transparent, within a thorough EA study, will the largest public acceptance be garnered.

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