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Off the Top SaskPower upgrading Boundary spillway

By Jonas Weinrauch
for The Mercury

Work on the upgrading of the concrete spillway at the Boundary Dam Power Station is now underway.

SaskPower announced nearly a year ago that it would be spending more than \$30 million over the next three years to replace the spillway, which is connected to the reservoir.

The project will restore the 50-year-old spillway with an upgraded design.

"The spillway project will address two issues," said Larry Christie, SaskPower spokesman. "It is 50 years old, and there are some maintenance issues that are to be addressed. Any time you have a 50-year-old concrete structure, there is frost heaving."

The spillway must also pass the probable maximum flood requirements as required by the Canadian Dam Association (CDA), and provide necessary cooling water for the power station.

"In the past 20 years we have spent several hundred million dollars in upgrades and refurbishments (at Boundary Dam Power Station)," said Christie. "This is part of our continuing efforts to make sure that our infrastructure is ready to continue."

Continued on Page A2



WEDNESDAY

Sunny
High 22 Low 7
POP 0%

THURSDAY

Sunny
High 23 Low 10
POP 0%

FRIDAY

Sunny
High 25 Low 8
POP 0%

SATURDAY

Cloudy Periods
High 23 Low 12
POP 10%

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Don't Fear This Bengal
Laura Cross of Winnipeg had some fun with her Bengal cat Romeo, a veteran of the cat show rings, as she prepped him for the show ring during the Saturday morning schedule of the Prairie Feline Fanciers cat show in the Estevan Curling Club. See story and more photos on Page A3.

Highways minister sets sights on twinning highways in southeast

By Norm Park
of The Mercury

Twinning Highways 39 and 6 (south) is now on the radar screen at the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure.

That was the word coming from Highways Minister Wayne Elhard on Thursday afternoon as he addressed about 60 members of the Estevan and Area Board of Tourism Trade and Commerce (ETTC) at their monthly business luncheon in the Elks Lodge.

But don't expect any construction to begin anytime soon, he warned the membership who had also come to hear some general details surrounding the proposed truck bypass. That stretch of road will be designed to take large semi-trailer units on a new stretch of highway located just north of the city, coming back to Highway 39 at the Rafferty Dam turnoff. The southern turn for the truck traffic will be located near the current Highway 39 and Shand Power Station road intersection.

"Southeast Saskatchewan has propelled the province into the national spotlight," Elhard told his audience after he was introduced by ETTC president Lynn Chipley.

He noted how the city of Estevan has enjoyed a nine per cent increase in total employment over the past year and a building permit increase of well over 40 per cent.

He said it is acknowledged that over 70 per cent of Saskatchewan's goods are exported and therefore the need for good highways and accompanying infrastructure is important.

Elhard said that his ministry was focusing a lot of its attention

on a major rebuilding of Highways 8 and 48 in this corner of the province this year as well as the rebuilding of the Highway 39 overpass right at the entrance to Estevan making it capable of handling the increased weights and traffic counts. He said that the highway leading into Estevan handles up to 6,200 vehicles daily.

Elhard said the five-year or medium term plan calls for the possible start to a twinning program for Highway 39 beginning with the additional lanes to be constructed from North Portal to Estevan since that was the busiest stretch in terms of vehicle volume. The next busiest area along the 230 kilometre stretch between Estevan and Regina was Highway 6 just south of Regina, so that would probably be the next section of the international road that would receive four lanes.

"There are a lot of hurdles, negotiations and easements that have to be arranged before you can even begin engineering," Elhard told The Mercury shortly after his speech.

During his address, Elhard said "transportation has been underfunded for too many years, but now we have a five-year rolling capital plan that gives you a clear indication for the future. We now have a rural highway strategy and identified the corridors that need to be rebuilt. The thin membrane roads built in the 1960s are now being rebuilt to recognize current needs and the primary weight system is being reworked."

He said all new highways will be built to primary weight standards and all rebuilt highways will meet that standard too.

Continued on Page A3

Preferred truck route unveiled

The where and the what have been determined but the when is a whole other story.

The latest open house on the proposed truck bypass was held Thursday night at the Souris Valley Aquatic and Leisure Centre.

Employees from the Ministry of Highways and UMA Engineering were on hand to unveil the preferred alignment for the bypass.

What they presented is a route that starts on the east side of Estevan on Highway 39 at the turn off to the Shand Power Station. The bypass, which will be a two lane highway, runs north and eventually turns to the west where it rejoins Highway 39 at the Rafferty Dam turnoff (See photo for truck route).

Bruce Belmore of UMA handled the majority of the presentation and gave a brief history on the events leading up to Thursday's open house before getting to the issue on the minds of the roughly 75 people in attendance: where is the truck route going to be and why?

Belmore said once it was determined a route north of Estevan was favoured, they came up with three different options which were presented at the first open house



This photo shows the preferred route for the proposed truck bypass which would run around Estevan.

in May.

After sifting through feedback from the public and applying a formula based on different criteria such as route continuity, and impact on future development plans, commercial property and residential property, they arrived at the route which Belmore presented Thursday.

"When you look at the score

(the chosen option) rated considerably higher than the other two options," said Belmore.

Although he admitted settling on a final route was a challenge, once all the factors were considered all parties were happy with the final decision Belmore said.

"It was a bit of a slam dunk."

Belmore added that another challenge for them, and one they

are still working on, has been the three major intersections on the route. He said they are trying to determine the best way to join the route with Highway 39 at both the east and west ends. They must also devise a new intersection where the truck route crosses Highway 47 north of Estevan.

"We have some of the answers and some of them we don't have at

this stage," said Belmore.

"We believe there is improvement needed at all three locations where we could have some left turn lanes, right turn lanes, acceleration lanes, possibly widening so that there is a median."

Belmore also touched on the costs of the various options and the role that played in their decision. He said they broke the route up into three sections and determined the cost for each option in that particular section.

The cost for section 1, which is the eastern portion of the route, averaged out at around \$6.4 million while the cost for the middle section was \$3.7 million. Section 3, which is the west section, had a price tag of roughly \$2.7 million.

While Belmore handled the where, he left the when to Jeffrey Holland of the Ministry of Highways.

Holland said the ministry does not have a fixed starting date at the present time.

"We don't even have a range yet," said Holland. "What we are doing right now is just trying to develop a plan so people who are trying to develop in this area know exactly where it is going to go and it allows for better planning."

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