

Bullet train is a wound to your wallet

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water!

The circling sharks – a.k.a. political lobbyists in Edmonton for high-speed rail – are back to take a bite out of your wallet.

The government researched a bullet train from downtown Calgary to downtown Edmonton in 2009, and priced it between \$3 billion and \$20 billion depending on which fast train was built.

In 2011, the transportation industry's Van Horne Institute estimated a cost of up to \$5 billion.

Inflation in the construction sector since then would mean a higher cost today.

The price of a new oilsands mine.

These studies found that the taxpayers of Alberta



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would bear most of the capital and operating costs because the tax revenue from such a train would not exceed \$200 million.

The cost of a train ticket would pay the monthly grocery bill and much of the rent for the typical rural Alberta family.

So most Albertans would not be on that train.

Remember the line from that Johnny Cash song about the high rollers on the train, "drinkin' fancy coffee and smokin' big cigars"?

Moe Amery, the Calgary East MLA, is not the sharpest pencil in the box of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

But he is the chair of the legislature's standing committee on Alberta's economic future and has launched the study.

The train lobbyists have persuaded Amery the project "is an exciting thing for the province . . . its future."

Amery says new public opinion now "drives" this train.

So we will have public meetings on the train led by public relations consultants who, no doubt, will be expected by their cousins the lobbyists to reach the foregone conclusion.

The bullet train is, in Moe Amery's overheated imagination, the gateway to Alberta's future.

That future depends, apparently, on the generous taxpayer.

The Tories think the project will drive a wedge between voters and the Wildrose Opposition – if Wildrose is "foolish" enough to oppose it.

Well, have at it Wildrose.

Oppose the train and drive a wedge between voters and tax-and-spend Tories.

Letter to the editor

Reckless pollution of our environment

Barry Brace's letter of Dec. 17 "No explosions in fracturing process" would have us believe that fracturing our underground geology with chemical laced solutions is a perfectly benign and harmless procedure.

I would refer him therefore, to an article recently published in the medical journal *Endocrinology*, the prestigious journal of the American Endocrine Society.

This study reports that a group of American scientists analyzed surface and groundwater samples from Garfield County, Colo.–a hotbed of fracking activity–and compared these to samples drawn from a region with little such activity.

Water samples near the fracking sites contained "moderate to high" levels of 12 different chemicals used in fracking that have known endocrine disrupting activity and have been shown to play a role in causing infertility, cancer, birth defects and other diseases.

Children are particularly sensitive to the effects of these chemicals. Samples taken from the Colorado River, which collects drainage from fracking sites also had moderate levels of these same chemicals. By comparison little activity was found in sites remote from drilling.

More than 700 chemicals are used in the fracking process, and the health dangers of many of these

are well established. I believe it is naïve and irresponsible to think that tons of these chemicals can be pumped into our environment and that there will not be eventual contamination of our underground and surface water reservoirs.

The fact that apparently so little contamination has been found in Alberta may well indicate a lack of sufficiently broad and rigorous monitoring.

My concern is that our children and grandchildren will pay the price for this reckless pollution of our environment.

Robert Griebel, MD
Bergin

Commentary

The Burl Ives we remember

For many years we've heard the familiar strains of *Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer* sung in the folksy, warm tones of Burl Ives. Burl held the role of Sam the Snowman, the banjo-playing narrator of the story. The "Rudolph" animated special has been on television steadily since it first aired in 1964. More recently it showed several times over the Christmas season and now is the longest-running Christmas special.

Burl Icle Ivanhoe Ives was born in Illinois in 1909. His father was a migrant farmer but the entire family was musical. Burl first performed at age four at a soldiers' reunion. He learned the banjo in high school and his interests always included music, although he showed talent in football as well. He entered Eastern Illinois Teachers College but soon dropped out, feeling he was wasting his time. As a point of interest, 60 years later his college named one of the buildings after their most famous dropout.

Burl travelled about as a wandering musician, hitchhiking and singing folk music for public gatherings and on small radio stations. He collected ballads, a love instilled in him by his grandmother. He eventually published a Burl Ives songbook, a variety of his favourite songs. He supported himself, singing and playing banjo and doing odd jobs, working for a time on a riverboat. He continued to travel and was once arrested for vagrancy.

He was drafted in 1942 and appeared in Irving Berlin's *This is the Army*, a production used to raise morale in the U.S. troops. He was soon discharged



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for medical reasons and returned to his pursuit of his singing career.

He earned the nickname "the wandering stranger" a name he used to advertise himself. He eventually began his own radio show. He also went back to school and went on to Juilliard and New York School of Music. He began taking acting classes and continued simultaneously with his music.

He had many hits and is best known for his songs: *A Little Bit of Tears*, *Funny Way of Laughing* and *Ghost Riders in the Sky*. In the '60s he began doing more country music, having hits on both popular and country charts. He recorded over 100 albums.

He was versatile in his acting roles, appearing in drama as well as comedy and voice work. He had roles in many films including *East of Eden* and Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor. During 1969-1972 he played a lawyer on the series *The Bold Ones*.

Following that time he worked mostly with Walt Disney Studios. In later years he became known to the *Star Wars* fans as the narrator in *Caravan of Courage: an Ewok Adventure*.

Burl officially retired at age 80, but continued to do occasional benefit appearances. He developed oral cancer and despite several operations, died in 1995. Elizabeth Taylor said of her fellow performer, "he possessed this wonderful teddy-bear warmth." Lester Persky, producer, said, "his soul was as deep as his voice."

Little Red Deer River mitigation work approved

BY DAN SINGLETON
MVP Staff

Mountain View County is moving forward with preliminary work on a flood mitigation project for the Little Red Deer River near Water Valley. The approval came during the recent council meeting.

Council has directed administration to obtain more detailed engineering and approvals to redirect the river and construct bank protection in 2014 under the provincial flood erosion control mitigation program.

Last month the provincial government announced that MVC will be receiving about \$850,000 in flood control and flood mitigation funding. The funds will be specifically directed towards flood prevention measures at Rge. Rd. 52 over the Little Red Deer River north of Water Valley.

The road has been washed out in flooding several times in recent years, prompting the county to install a temporary bridge, which is pulled out of the river when flood conditions arise, such as in the spring of 2013.

"The money will go towards the project for river training, to direct the river back under the regular bridge where it would normally go," said Reeve Bruce Beattie.

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E-mail Editorial content: gazette@olds.greatwest.ca

Website: www.mountainviewgazette.ca

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Editor: Dan Singleton
Photographer: Noel West
Reporters: Paul Frey, Olds
Paul Everest, Olds
Johnnie Bachusky, Innisfail
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