



News Release

RET Supports Rick Orman Position on Heartland Transmission Project

(Sherwood Park) August 25, 2011. Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans (RET) is pleased with the announcement today on the proposed Heartland Transmission Project by Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta leadership candidate Rick Orman.

"We are excited about Rick Orman's support to get the Heartland line buried near densely-populated areas", said Bruce Johnson, President of RET. "To get one of the P.C. Party leadership candidates to make a public announcement like this with just over three weeks to go before the first ballot, goes to show how important this issue has become to Albertans."

Over the past three years, RET has been promoting the burying of high voltage power lines in special circumstances whenever they run close to homes, schools, daycare centres, hospitals and environmentally sensitive areas. The proposed double-circuit 500 kilovolt Heartland line, if built, will be the largest project of its kind in Alberta, with towers up to 77 metres (253 feet) tall, twice the height of normal high voltage towers.

"The fact that Mr. Orman is supporting the underground technology when large numbers of people are affected, is evidence that he has listened to our concerns and has researched the matter", continued Johnson. "He has been telling Albertans that he is willing to take bold stands on issues of principle, and now we believe him."

John Kristensen, Vice President Technical of RET, added, "Mr. Orman wasn't in government when all of the legislation was passed in 2008 and 2009 that streamlined the whole process of getting new high voltage power lines built in Alberta at the expense of public involvement. It's refreshing to see his approach to not only electricity transmission, but to many other issues as well."

Residents living near the proposed Heartland line have expressed strong concerns about the potential effects of such a massive line on health, safety, the environment, property values and aesthetics. Most recently, RET and many other interveners presented evidence in this regard over a five-week period at the Alberta Utilities Commission hearing. RET has asked the Commission to either deny AltaLink's and EPCOR's facility application for the line based on an improperly-conducted public consultation process, or if the decision is to allow the line to be built, to order the applicants to bury the line for at least that segment of the route that is near densely-populated residential areas in Sherwood Park and Edmonton. (This 20-kilometre segment of the 66-kilometre line contains 97% of the population along the applicants' preferred route.)

"The announcement today supports what Albertans told us in a 2009 public opinion survey conducted by Leger Marketing", said Kristensen.

About 70% of the 900 Albertans polled think power lines can be located safely underground near homes, schools and daycare centres, while 68% are willing to pay something on their monthly power bill to have the lines buried. On average, Albertans are willing to pay \$3.55 more per month to have power lines buried anywhere in the province when the lines run close to homes or schools.

Based on RETA's evidence presented at the recent AUC hearing, the additional annual cost of burying the Heartland line to the average Alberta ratepayer would amount to the cost of a cup of coffee. If the capital, maintenance and transmission loss costs over the life of a line are combined, and you add the property devaluation costs associated with overhead lines, a buried line can cost less than an overhead line.

"The fact that Mr. Orman is willing to tackle electricity transmission head-on shows us he's not part of the government that got us into this mess in the first place, and it shows us he's willing to make things right. He's got guts", added Johnson.

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For more information or if you have any questions, see www.RETA.ca or contact:

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Attachment: Benefits of Underground High Voltage Power Lines