



VALTOA Brings Provincial Political Leaders to Vegreville to Discuss Proposed Transmission Lines

Just two months ago, prompted by letters from ATCO, a few neighbours met to discuss their concerns about a proposed power line that would end up running through their properties. They were worried about how the infrastructure would economically and environmentally impact their property and interfere with their plans for their land, in some cases held by their families for generations. With short notice and insufficient information provided by ATCO or government, the group of friends and concerned citizens set about to raise awareness of the proposed transmission line, seek answers from both ATCO and the Alberta government, and advocate for the citizens in the County of Two Hills, County of Minburn and Beaver County, through which the power lines would eventually run.

From that first meeting in one of their garages grew a grassroots, volunteer movement dedicated to ensuring landowners have the opportunity for due process, so they can understand the ramifications of the project on their holdings in a structured, comprehensive and transparent manner. They formed VALTOA, the Vegreville Area Landowners Transmission line Opposition Association, which has held a number of public meetings and networked with other landowner advocacy groups that have sprouted up throughout the province, in response to four other transmission line proposals.

VALTOA has attracted 267 concerned landowner members, started a growing petition to stop the power line, and launched a letter writing campaign to Premier Stelmach, MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and to Infrastructure Minister Ray Danyluk, MLA for

Lac La Biche-St Paul-Two Hills. VALTOA collects “mediation diaries” from landowners, to document the concerns and experiences of landowners impacted by the proposal for the ATCO Electric Transmission Line Route CD65 to and including E177. So far, VALTOA has collected 363 mediation diaries, and to date, has presented several to Premier Stelmach, Minister Danyluk, and ATCO officials.

“These power lines are slated to come straight through our area” Terry Urichuk stated. “Since getting involved out of concern for our fellow friends and neighbours, we also learned about new laws the Alberta Government passed that could negatively impact landowners and give overreaching powers to government and cabinet. We think all Albertans should learn about the impacts of these laws.”

VALTOA also works with other landowner groups to raise awareness of landowner rights under the Surface Rights Act and the impacts of three pieces of legislation- Bill 19, 36 and 50- brought in by the Alberta government in 2009. Among other changes, these new pieces of legislation centralize decision making in cabinet and undermine landowners by allowing government to designate tracts of land for major infrastructure projects, extinguish land titles, leases and licenses, enables government to freeze land without compensation and removes the requirement for a “needs application” for new transportation utility corridors.

To discuss these bills, the power line project and general issues related to power needs and proposals in Alberta, VALTOA will host a public forum on Wednesday, August 25th at the Vegreville Social Center at 4804 – 47 Street at 7:00pm, to which all Alberta’s political leaders have been invited. At the time of writing, Official Opposition and Liberal Leader, Dr. David Swann, Leader of the NDP Brian Mason and Wildrose Leader Danielle Smith have all confirmed their attendance.