

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Sept 28th, 2009

**Press Contact:**

Bruce Johnson, RETA

[bruce@reta.ca](mailto:bruce@reta.ca)

or,

June McNeil, Coalition of West End Communities for Burying the Line

[nmcneil@telusplanet.net](mailto:nmcneil@telusplanet.net)

**STRENGTH IN UNITY – RETA AND WEST TUC GROUP MERGE**

*RETA and Coalition of West End Communities for Burying the Line, Merge to Create Single Unified Voice on Heartland Transmission Line Issue*

**Edmonton, AB. Sept 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009** – The Coalition of West End Communities for Burying the Line and RETA (Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans) today jointly announced their decision to merge their organizations. The Coalition, which has been educating and informing west Edmonton residents about the hazards associated with high voltage power lines since June 2009, has been working closely with RETA to help ensure that the 500kV dual circuit transmission line proposed for the Heartland Transmission Project is buried wherever it goes near schools, houses, daycare centres, hospitals and environmentally sensitive areas.

“It just makes sense to merge the organizations – we’ve been working so closely together and we want exactly the same thing which is to bury the power line wherever it goes” said June McNeil, founding member of the Coalition. Bruce Johnson, President of RETA, added, “We’re delighted. By joining the groups together we send a strong message to our elected representatives that we expect them to all work together to get these lines put underground where they belong.” The groups have decided to come together under the RETA banner but will also keep the Coalition name for continuity.

This announcement comes right on the heels of a successful town hall meeting at the West Edmonton Christian Assembly that saw 1,400 Edmonton and area residents come out to see presentations by the Coalition and RETA and to ask tough questions of their elected representatives, the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) and the Heartland

Project Team (AltaLink and EPCOR). “It was a hugely successful meeting” said McNeil. “The show of support from 1,400 concerned residents was truly remarkable.”

This meeting represents the most recent in a series of Town Hall meetings that have been put on by RETA and the Coalition which have seen 400 people at Belmead Community League, 1,000 people at Festival Place and nearly 2,000 people at the Coast Hotel in Sherwood Park express their concerns over the proposed line. There have also been numerous other community meetings in St. Albert, Fultonvale School, Villeneuve Community Hall, Morinville, Namao and at other venues showing that this is an issue of real concern for all Albertans. “The next meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November at Hall D at Northlands at 7:00 p.m. is going to be enormous” said Johnson. “With the combined members from all of the affected routes we expect to get well over 5,000 people to come out.”

McNeil credits the non-NIMBY (not in my back yard) approach to the progress that has been made to date. “We’ve made incredible progress by insisting that these lines need to go underground whenever they run near schools and homes regardless of whose back yard they run in. RETA has also strongly held this belief and so we’re delighted to be announcing that we’re going to work together now with one, stronger voice.”

To make sure that all of the affected areas have a strong advocate and that everything possible is being done to raise awareness and build support along all of the four proposed routes, RETA has decided to appoint Vice Presidents for each of the regions. “We’re starting by asking June McNeil to take up the post of Vice President for the West TUC” Johnson said. “But we’ll also be appointing executive from the rural west route, St. Albert, Ellerslie, the East TUC and the rural east route as well as possibly others. It is critical that we make sure everyone in all areas comes out to our meetings and gets the opportunity to have their opinions heard.” McNeil added “With solid representation and advocacy for all of the affected areas, we’re sending a message that politicians simply cannot ignore.”

For more information on RETA and the Coalition please visit [www.reta.ca](http://www.reta.ca) and [www.westtuc.com](http://www.westtuc.com).