



update

February 5, 2009

Please attend our:

**Annual General Meeting to be Held
Feb.25, 2009 at Bardo Hall 7:30 pm**

Twp Road 500 & Hwy #834

- ✓ Guest Speakers on Using Alternative Energy Sources in Alberta
- ✓ Get updated on the Sherritt proposed project
- ✓ Update on what VOCAL has been doing over the past year
- ✓ Get involved!



It's been awhile since our last update. After a whirlwind beginning, the delay of Sherritt's application has allowed us some much needed time to catch our breath!

Activities since our summer newsletter include:

- ~ Meeting with Sherritt July 15th
- ~ Meet with Doug Griffiths MLA July 16th
- ~ Met with George Rogers, MLA August 1st
- ~ Met with Rachel Notley, Leader Alberta NDP Aug. 20th
- ~ Met with Ducks Unlimited Aug. 13th
- ~ Participation in Cumulative Effects Workshops
- ~ Met with Bill McElhanney Aug 26
- ~ Field trip from Environmental Impact Assessment class from Augustana Faculty (UofA) Oct. 4
- ~ Worked with students from Augustana Puebla Alberta Community Service Exchange program (Oct-Dec)
- ~ Attended Council of Canadians meeting
- ~ Various letters/articles printed
- ~ Contacted by Alberta Environmental Network Clean Air Energy Caucus – we're just learning more about this group
- ~ Contacted by Dr. Parkins, Dept. of Rural Economy, U of Alberta regarding a Social Impact Assessment that will be taking place this spring



Chair's Comments

It has been just over a year since the Voice of Community and Land Society was formed. We held our organizational meeting on February 13 of last year and were officially registered under the Societies Act on April 17, 2008. VOCAL is now having its first Annual General Meeting and what a year it has been. So much has happened and so much has changed in the past year.

Of course, the big news is that the Sherritt Dodds Roundhill Coal gasification project has been put on hold, all be it temporarily. This has certainly given us some breathing room and a chance to reflect on our past year, as well as some time to plan for the future.

Looking back, has VOCAL been a success? Was all the time, effort, energy and emotions of so many people worth it? Without a doubt I believe we have been hugely successful. We have raised the public awareness of the environmental and social costs of the Sherritt proposal. We wanted to be another voice for those opposed to the development and I think we have been that. We have had the opportunity to meet and talk with so many interesting and influential people, most, but of course not all of whom, were sympathetic to our cause. We met with politicians at all levels of government and of all political parties. We have had contact with large and small environmental organizations. We have shared strategies and concerns with other land owner groups throughout Alberta. We have been successful at attracting media attention locally, provincially and nationally. We have had interest from academic groups and students. Most importantly, we have received support from many ordinary Albertans and Canadians who are concerned about the long term impacts of developments such as the Sherritt proposal. All of these contacts, and knowing there are many, many groups and individuals that care, has kept us energized.

Where to from here? We do not know when the Sherritt proposal or some other proposal will be forthcoming. We all know the coal is here, and as long as we rely on so called conventional energy sources, the demand for that coal is not going away. The question that I would like to raise is this: As a society, are we willing to make the changes necessary so that we no longer submit our environment to the harmful effects of producing and burning fossil fuels? When does the time come when we decide that we can no longer continue to do the things to our planet that we have done and continue to do to provide ourselves with the energy we need to survive? Are there other ways that we could be getting our energy?

I believe those of us that are trying to protect our way of life from being destroyed by energy development have a responsibility to, at the very least, try to put forward some alternatives. And so, the focus of VOCAL's first Annual General Meeting is to try and present some information on alternative - renewable energy sources. There are no easy fixes but we will continue to make our voices heard.

Bill