



VANCOUVER ISLAND TRANSMISSION REINFORCEMENT PROJECT
A Summary of the Corporation of Delta's Involvement 2005-2008

The Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project (VITRP) is a BC Transmission Corporation (BCTC) initiative to replace and upgrade the powerlines between South Delta and Vancouver Island.

The south Delta section of the route includes the placement of transmission lines, along an existing right-of-way, through a residential area of Tsawwassen, in close proximity to homes, a school and parks. Issues of concern to the local community include potential health impacts from exposure to electro-magnetic fields; impacts on property values; and aesthetic concerns relating to the placement of taller towers through the community.

The project received approval from the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC) in July 2006 and from the BC Environmental Assessment Office in February 2007. In support of the Tsawwassen community, the Corporation of Delta has been an active participant in both regulatory processes:

- The Corporation of Delta was represented throughout the year-long BCUC public hearing process and argued against the placement of lines (overhead or underground) along the existing right-of-way through Tsawwassen. Delta is also opposed to the placement of lines beneath municipal roadways.
- Through the environmental assessment review process, Delta recommended that the project be denied on grounds that the proximity of high voltage transmission lines to residences, schools and parks pose an undetermined and, therefore, unacceptable risk to human health.
- The Corporation of Delta is supportive of the 'precautionary approach' when there is scientific uncertainty related to health impacts, and has consistently advocated for relocation of the powerlines away from residential areas to highway corridors such as Deltaport Way.
- The Corporation of Delta has incurred costs in excess of \$150,000 in legal and consulting fees directly related to this issue.

In December 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada denied a leave to appeal application by the local residents group, TRAHVOL (Tsawwassen Residents Against Higher Voltage Overhead Lines), and upheld the previous decision of the BC Court of Appeal.

In March 2008, the Provincial government reviewed the option to use horizontal directional drilling to underground the line through Tsawwassen and confirmed its decision to go overhead. Construction through Tsawwassen started in June 2008 and is scheduled to be complete by the end of October 2008.

Correspondence from Mayor Lois E. Jackson to Premier Cambell

June 28, 2005:

"No community should be obliged to risk the health of its children for the sake of financial or technical expediency. The routing of an industrial-capacity transmission line next to our homes, parks, schools and daycare centres cannot be justified when viable alternatives exist. We request that BCTC be required to



evaluate those alternatives in a process of open consultation and arrive at a solution that is acceptable to this community.”

December 6, 2005:

“The decisions being made now will impact our community for the next 60 years. We must ensure that it is the right decision for the sake of our residents, the environment and the community.”

July 26, 2006:

“We urge you to set aside the BCUC decision [for overhead lines] and to direct re-examination of the alternative routes and options that would take the lines out of our communities and affirm the earlier commitment made by your government to respect the wishes of its citizens.”

March 21, 2007:

“We are asking for your leadership as Premier, to direct BCTC to postpone work on the South Delta section of the VITRP and to work with the Corporation of Delta, VPA, TFN and the community group, TRAHVOL, to make a proper evaluation of the Deltaport Gateway Corridor as an alternative to the option currently being proposed.”

May 9, 2007:

“We would like to bring your attention to a new report that was released recently in the UK ...which recommends that high voltage power lines should not be constructed within 60 metres of residential properties.”

October 30, 2007:

“Delta Council is supportive of [TRAHVOL’s] horizontal directional drilling proposal to place the transmission lines underground along the existing right of way through Tsawwassen.”

February 6, 2008:

“Delta Council is supportive of the horizontal directional drilling proposal and believes that it provides an excellent opportunity to resolve community concerns as well as providing a viable alternative for BCTC to complete the VITR project.”

March 6, 2008:

“We thank the Province and Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources for acknowledging the community concerns by independently evaluating the horizontal directional drilling option. We urge you to further acknowledge the community’s concerns and overwhelming support for HDD, and choose the solution that is sure to be a win for everyone involved.”

August 6, 2008:

“Since BCTC began construction work on the Tsawwassen segment of the VITRP in June, we have received a flood of complaints and concerns from local residents relating to the project. We seek assurances on the following issues:

- That the VITR project is in full compliance with Environmental Assessment Certificate # E06-06 and, in view of the soil contamination that has been found, confirmation that the requirements of the provincial *Contaminated Sites Regulation* are also being met.



- That BCTC will be required to undertake soil sampling at all locations where transmission poles have been removed in south Delta, including agricultural land, to ensure there is no residual contamination in excess of provincial land use standards.
- That BCTC will be required to refund Delta for the costs associated with soil and groundwater sampling undertaken in response to resident's concerns.
- That the Provincial Medical Health Officer reviews and provides comments back to the Corporation of Delta regarding the recent report from the Toronto Medical Health Officer that recommends a policy of 'prudent avoidance' to reduce childhood exposure to EMF from transmission lines."

September 10, 2008 (to Minister of Environment):

"We have identified a number of concerns with respect to the post-certification processes and procedures [for VITRP, Deltaport Third Berth and SFPR], specifically:

- A lack of coordinated monitoring and enforcement of the requirements of the environmental assessment certificate and associated 'table of commitments' by regulatory agencies.
- Uncertainty regarding post-certification procedures – the EAO Director has discretion as to what post-certification committees will be established and how monitoring will be undertaken.
- A lack of independent compliance assessment – the proponent is primarily responsible for assessing compliance.

We are requesting that a review of the post-certification procedures and responsibilities under the *BC Environmental Assessment Act* be undertaken and that changes be implemented to improve transparency and accountability for future projects, including:

- a. the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the EAO and other government agencies during the post-certification phase;
- b. the enactment of a mandated system of compliance monitoring by a multi-agency Working Group, comprising federal, provincial and local government representatives, that meets at regular intervals throughout the construction and post-construction monitoring phase of the project, and which reports directly to the EAO for follow-up action with the proponent as required; and
- c. the establishment of a mandated community liaison committee to facilitate communication between the proponent, regulatory agencies, the local government and members of the local community."

The BC Environmental Assessment Act is a key piece of legislation enacted to support a system of openness and neutrality in the decision-making process for major development projects throughout the province. As you may be aware, the Act was extensively amended in 2002, removing some mandatory post-certification requirements. We believe that another review of the Act is now warranted and that changes can be made to the post-certification processes and procedures to improve openness, transparency and accountability."



September 10, 2008 (to BCTC):

“We request BCTC to provide written confirmation to owners of property from which wooden transmission poles have been removed that all contaminated soil has been identified and remediated to the standards in the Contaminated Sites Regulation, and that all wood and debris from the pole removal work has been removed and disposed of properly.”

October 7, 2008 (to Minister of Energy, Mines & Petroleum Resources):

“With the imminent completion of the Vancouver Island Transmission Reinforcement Project, we are receiving inquiries from residents in Tsawwassen about the buy-out option that was proposed earlier this summer. At that time, the Province was offering to buy residential properties along the BC Hydro right-of-way in Tsawwassen from property owners wanting to sell.

We have received few details regarding this option since that time and, understandably, some of the residents would like to see some progress in this regard. I would appreciate it if you could provide an update on this matter and provide assurance that the buy-out option is going ahead as planned.”

CHRONOLOGY

2004

December - BCTC announces VITRP.

2005

March - the Province and BCTC make commitment not to go overhead through Tsawwassen.

2006

May – BCTC makes application for approval to BCUC and BCEAO for undergrounding lines through Tsawwassen. Delta makes case for routing the lines down Highway 17 and opposes placing lines under municipal streets for the following reasons:

- BCTC indicated that Delta would be responsible for any additional costs of undergrounding – estimated \$5 - \$13 million.
- EMF exposure would be worse than overhead since no shielding was proposed and the lines would be closer to people in the community.
- The lines need 10 m separation which could not be accommodated in most streets – therefore the cables would have had to have been routed down two streets, thereby impacting twice as many residents.
- There would be conflicts with existing and future infrastructure, including watermains, sewers, drainage, gas mains and communication cables.

July – BCUC approves project but directs overhead option through Tsawwassen.

2007

February – Environmental Assessment Certificate issued.

2008

February – Province examines horizontal directional drilling option – supported by Delta and residents.

March – Province confirms overhead route.

October – construction through Tsawwassen complete.