

NEWS RELEASE

April 5, 2007

This morning, three representatives from Alberta's rural community, met with the Alberta Government's Rural Caucus, requesting immediate changes to the Land Agents Licensing Act.

Warren Brower, from the Alberta Surface Rights Federation, Don Bester, representing the Pine Lake Surface Rights Action Group and the Coalition for Alberta's Future, and Greg Hoar of the Crestomere Landowners Association, made the presentation in the wake of last Friday's guilty decision in the Ray Strom case.

Mr. Strom, a landowner advocate, had been charged with acting as a land agent without a license, during negotiations with energy companies. In the meeting today, it was submitted that landowners should have the freedom to choose their representatives and advisors. This submission was reinforced by numerous resolutions from Alberta's rural organizations.

In his decision, the Honourable Judge P. Ayotte wrote:

“the Act creates an unbalanced playing field favouring the oil and gas industry”, and

“the Act has become bad legislation in need of revision”.

In order to correct this situation, it was suggested that the government must make changes to clarify that the Act does not pertain to landowners and their representatives, and that the offending clause under which Mr. Strom was charged, must be deleted from the Act.

If the government fails to correct this situation, it may ultimately require an appeal to a higher court. Again, the Judge provided direction saying that landowners and landowner groups have the right to apply to the Court of Queen's, if they get no other satisfactory redress. Mr. Strom also retains his right to appeal. Anyone wishing to financially support this cause through the Strom Defence Fund, is encouraged to contact the Alberta Surface Rights Federation.

The presentation was well received by the members of rural caucus, who posed many questions indicative of the current importance of this issue.