

The Dehumanization of Tax Paying Citizens,  
by Public Service Corporations,  
in The Eminent Domain Process

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We, the people of Minnesota elect representatives in both the senate and the house, to represent our interests, and to serve us –the tax payers. Many Minnesota citizens feel most legislators have sold citizens out to large businesses. They care only when they are up for re-election.

Free speech by citizens is a constitutional right, yet recently heralded as being radical and worse. It seems the government plays the game of “allow the citizenry to get involved so they can vent their frustration”, then we’ll do what we want anyway, after all the citizenry can’t say they weren’t heard! Since 2006 land owners have gone through a horrendous debacle with the MinnCan Crude Oil Pipeline, an LLC under Koch Industries Rosemount, MN. The **process is completely flawed**. Representatives from MinnCan were sent out to coerce, harass, lie and intimidate land owners to sign biased easements months before a certificate of need was issued. A process that should have been done with realistic and honorable negotiations between involved parties turned out to be an extremely **Demeaning, Degrading, and Dehumanizing experience**. This process was and still is beyond belief.

If this process was not bad enough, landowners were subjected to low ball offers. Hundreds actually signed easements after being told if they want an attorney it would delay the process (construction or payment?) and offers would be less. Other, not signing the biased easement, were told by pipeline representatives they would take our property through Eminent Domain. The *quick take* is the first step for a condemning entity to receive title to property, **by law**, that the landowner did not want to sell and now has no rights in but is still obligated to pay real estate taxes on.

Prior to the installation of the MinnCan pipeline in ‘08, tree cutters were hired by the pipeline, to cut hundreds (perhaps thousands) of mature trees which were cut and burned in January thru March ‘08 on private property during a weather inversion. The trees were wet and green and burned on the property the same day as the cutting. Some product was used to start the fires that burned with a yellow flame and a lot of black smoke. Some landowners were told by the tree cutters “that they were not to talk to the property owners- just cut and burn”.

The pipeline company stated in their **Environmental Assessment Supplement to the Pipeline Routing Permit Application (to the PUC) Table of Contents 1.0 page 8 (1.3) reads –“clearing and grading”** –The very last sentence reads:

**“Landowners will be given the option to take the timber which is cut down”. In addition: page 11 (1.3) under “Cleanup” “2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph reads-the disposal of timber, slash (brush and small branches), and rock will be done in accordance with the desires of the landowner. When landowners called the pipeline after the trees had been cut and burned, we were told to notify the pipeline company if we wanted the trees, which is hard to do once the trees were gone. Landowners were not notified by anyone, much less from the pipeline company, when the trees would be cut.**

This process started in March of '06. Three years have passed, yet many landowners have not yet been fully compensated -- still waiting for payment. Some owners have not had a commission hearing. Some will eventually go to District Court to receive fair and just compensation, but at additional expense for the owner.

**“The Public Utilities Commission which issues the Certificates of Need should be renamed to Private Utilities Cash-house as they cater to private big business.”**

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This brings us to the present CapX2020 project. The above pipeline scenario was allowed to happen because of the Eminent Domain exemptions that also apply to this project. In 2005-06 the legislature changed the Eminent Domain laws but gave exemptions to public service corporations. Two years ago this transmission line was being **touted for wind by CapX2020** because of the states mandate for renewable energy. Early on the lies started at public meetings. No one mentioned coal or other alternatives.

CapX2020 spearheaded by Xcel Energy is a consortium of 10+ other electric utility companies. Xcel Energy is the only corporation of this group allowed to present an application for a Certificate of Need to the PUC. The public was told that three different 345kV transmission lines are needed because of expanded electric needs in Minnesota, especially the Brookings line for wind.

CapX2020 having received a Certificate of Need also has the same right of **Eminent Domain** as the pipeline afore mentioned above. These three lines are just the beginning of other high voltage lines coming through Minnesota, affecting thousands of land owners now, and perhaps thousands more in the future. These exemptions must be eliminated to achieve fair and just compensation for these future property owners. The unfairness of the Eminent Domain laws was brought to the attention of the PUC in March '09 by land owners who were then ignored.

If the State of Minnesota will not allow crude oil, gas pipelines, or high voltage transmission lines to go through State property, why should citizens be forced to accept them?? If this is for the "common good" of Minnesota then the State should allow state property to be part of the mix.

Why should "PUBLIC SERVICE CORPORATIONS" insult, degrade, dehumanize and out right lie to owners on their property values without many receiving appraisals. These public service corporations set the price on a "take it or leave it basis". If State property was available to be subjected to this abuse the State would be up in arms and laws would immediately be changed. Yet our own government (legislators and all government agencies presently involved in this process) turns a blind eye and ear to the plight of citizens whose property is being forcibly taken from them under the present Eminent Domain laws. These exemptions put in place by the legislature have become like leeches on the backs of the citizenry, with the PUC leading the way.

Citizens, and their rights, not only need to be heard, but validated, as we are not ignorant, nor are we pleased by the way we are treated. **What will it take to get a fair system so the property owners get as much respect, support and just compensation as the entity taking the land owners property?**

UNITED CITIZENS ACTION NETWORK

JUDY MARTIN, Joyce OSBORN

QUOTES BY THOMAS JEFFERSON

"Democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not."

"If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation then deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all property until their children wake up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered."

