

## **An Open Letter and Invitation for a Debate to Clarify the Direction for Coal in Alberta**

Dear Premier Smith, Minister Jean, and Minister Schulz,

Over the past five years, Albertans have voiced their displeasure with the government's handling of the coal issue. Decisions on coal have been made behind closed doors without public consultation. Polls consistently show that 70% of Albertans oppose new coal exploration or mining in the Eastern Slopes, believing that the risks to water and health outweigh any economic benefits.

Despite this clear mandate, the Government of Alberta is pushing forward with a new Coal Industry Modernization Initiative that allows new coal mining in the Eastern Slopes and consults only with the coal industry. Additionally, lifting the moratorium on new coal exploration and development risks further damage to lands and waters and increases liability to Albertans. The details and justification for these actions are unclear, contradicting the government's stated objectives of transparency and grassroots decision-making. Every time a government representative speaks about the coal issue, it becomes more confusing.

In the interest of transparency, we challenge the Premier, the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, and the Minister of Energy to a long-form moderated public debate on the coal issue. We believe the government has not acted in the interest of the majority of Albertans, and it is time to put all the facts on the table. Key areas of clarity required are:

- Will the Ministers commit to a Coal Industry Modernization Initiative that prohibits all new coal mines, in line with the opinion of Albertans?
- Given that no technology prevents water contamination at the scale of an operating coal mine, how does the government intend to protect clean water and Albertans?
- Multiple economic assessments indicate that coal mine development is unlikely to be a net economic benefit to Alberta. Why does the government insist on moving forward with coal mines contrary to the public interest?
- How can the government ignore large-scale consultation and polls opposing coal mining while using a non-binding municipal poll, essentially run by a coal company, to direct provincial policy?

The findings of the Joint Review Panel for the Grassy Mountain mine highlight the risks of all coal mines in the Eastern Slopes, concluding that the project is likely to result in significant adverse environmental effects that outweigh the economic benefits. Moreover, the Coal Policy Committee's eight principle recommendations, based on extensive engagement and accepted by the government in 2021, have not been acted upon, and recent actions conflict with these recommendations.

Given these concerns and the lack of transparency from the provincial government, we issue this challenge to publicly debate these issues to clarify the government's intentions around mining in the Eastern Slopes – you owe it to Albertans.

Sincerely,

Bill Trafford, President of the Livingstone Landowners Group and Former Member of the Coal Policy Committee

Corb Lund, Musician

Katie Morrison, Executive Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta Chapter

*On behalf of the majority of Albertans who oppose any new coal development in the Eastern Slopes.*