

Good afternoon. My Name is Sandy Davis and I am representing myself as a concerned Calgarian and Albertan. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important issue.

### **Speaking notes**

I am here today to ask that the City of Calgary, take a leadership role and ask the Provincial Government to immediately re-instate the 1976 Coal Development Policy that was rescinded on June 1, 2020, and as well to request an immediate stop to exploration activities on our Eastern Slopes.

This 1976 Coal Development Policy was developed with input from the scientific community as well as numerous stake holders and the general public over many months. It was **not** an anti resource development policy. It was developed to establish a reasoned balance between coal resource development... and watershed and ecosystem protection.

In order to accomplish this goal, land that was of interest to the coal mining industry was divided into 4 categories. These categories identified areas of land where open pit mining was not allowed because it was known that the damage from this **type** of mining was irreversible. These lands were identified as Categories 1 and 2. (Note: Underground mining could be proposed and considered in Category 2 lands. ) Open pit mining was designated to be permissible in other categories ....3 and 4.... generally further east, as long as specific environmental protections were in place.

This policy thus provided clarity to this resource industry as the guidelines were clear.....do not apply for open pit mining in Category 1 and 2 areas in the Eastern Slopes as the risks to watersheds and sensitive ecosystems in these areas is too high. Since that policy was rescinded, numerous applications from mainly foreign coal mining companies have been submitted for open pit mines in these sensitive Category 2 areas. We are here today talking about the safety of our Alberta water supply because of this.

So what is open pit mining? The process of open pit mining requires that the top layer of vegetation, trees, soil be removed. Then the rock forming the mountain is blasted away with explosives to expose the vein of coal that will be stripped away and sent to asian markets for use in making steel. This rock rubble is called "overburden" and is pushed into piles in the valleys. Rain and snow melt wash over this blasted rock debris and cause leaching of toxic elements into the ground water.

Through this process, of open pit mining, elements such as selenium end up in our water supply. Selenium is a substance that is necessary in small amounts, but easily moves into the toxic range when levels elevate. Fish and reptiles are the first to show signs of distress...followed by birds, then other mammals and humans. The selenium levels do not drop over time as contaminated water flows downstream; it has been seen to actually increase. Over the border in BC, in the Elk Valley, water wells in Sparwood have been closed down as the water is now contaminated. Teck, the coal mining company there, has been trucking in potable water for the town. They have built a multimillion dollar plant in an attempt to remove the selenium from the water...but all attempts have failed. The technology to remove the selenium is not available. The endangered Westslope cutthroat trout are already ( and have for some time) been displaying deformities from toxic selenium levels.

If this type of mining proceeds on our eastern slopes, the risk to our Alberta water supply is threefold: First of all, the eastern slopes are our watersheds....water is collected and flows into the creeks and streams that flow into our rivers and continue all the way through Saskatchewan and Manitoba into the Hudson Bay. Explosions in these watersheds will destroy the actual collection and source of our water. ....Secondly, we know that our current water supply is already heavily allocated. Urban supply, agricultural irrigation and multiple other users in our arid province put heavy demands on our water supply. These coal mining companies are already being promised allocations as their process requires a great deal of water. The third risk of course is the selenium contamination.

Representatives of the GOA , specifically Minister Jason Nixon, states that the 1976 Policy was outdated and that new more stringent processes are in place to protect the environment. This is just not true. If it was, the government would not currently be spending time and money reviewing applications for these mines in these category 2 areas. The old policy

would have been clear in communicating that this **type** of mining is not allowed in **these areas**. The President of the Coal Association of Canada, Robin Campbell, responded to a question about : why is this happening now? by stating that the government is now agreeable to removing restrictions.

Exploration permits have already been issued to companies that **have only submitted applications** for open pit mining. The exploration activities are abundantly evident and very damaging. Many kilometres of roads have been cut through pristine wilderness areas, and hundreds of drill sites have been created. These roads will have major implications for spring run off in the area...as well as their impact on wildlife (including endangered species). None of this would have occurred under the old 1976 Coal Development Policy ....unless of course the Government issued an exemption.( a topic for another day) But there would have been no expectation of that from the coal industry. Now we have coal companies lining up to take advantage of this new opportunity.

So why would the Government of Alberta want to move in this direction? Alberta's economy is struggling and the current government is trying to attract foreign investment. The coal companies are lobbying hard and promising to reclaim the land and water after their mines close. However we know that a mountain can not be replaced after it has been blown up ....and the water source can not be made to reappear,.... or to be rid of selenium contamination. We are foolish if we believe these promises. We need only to look at the experiences next door in BC,... or to West Virginia..... or to Australia.... to see the lasting damage that these mines do. And after the coal prices drop,... or a different technology is developed to replace coal in the making of steel,..... or the vein of coal is depleted.....the coal company will pack up and move out....and leave Alberta with unimaginable environmental damage.

I know I have not begun to touch on all the problems that will result: implications for wildlife...., farming...., ranching....., tourism or recreation.... if this policy is not re-instated. ....not to mention loss of our iconic Rocky Mountains.....or ...impact on climate change. The risk is not at all comparable to any perceived benefit.

If these open pit mines are allowed to proceed in these sensitive areas of Alberta's headwaters , the City of Calgary will be left with a major problems. What happens to Alberta, happens to Calgarians.....

This is why I believe it is imperative for the City of Calgary to take a formal position to stop open pit mining in these sensitive areas and ask the government of Alberta to immediately re-instate the 1976 Coal Development Policy, and put an immediate stop to exploration activities.

Thank you for listening

