

January 19, 2021

The Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
premier@gov.ab.ca

Dear Honourable Premier Kenney

Re: Proposed Grassy Mountain Coal Mine and the Provincial Coal Policy

As municipal leaders in communities dependent on the Eastern Slopes of Alberta, we have serious concerns with provincial coal policy and approval of the proposed metallurgical coal project called the Grassy Mountain Coal Mine.

Our primary concerns are the closed metallurgical coal mines and unemployed workers along the Eastern Slopes. These mines need provincial support to reopen. If metallurgical coal is in demand, it should be extracted from existing infrastructure, with existing workforce, and on the existing land dispositions.

The production of metallurgical coal at Grassy Mountain would directly compete with any sales from the Vista Coal, Cardinal River, and Grande Cache Coal mines; making it extremely difficult to reopen mines that are already closed. Likewise, the Grassy Mountain project is generating significant negative media attention both in Alberta and in the downstream United States, which could have negative consequences on the reopening of existing mines along the Eastern Slopes.

We have many environmental concerns with mountain top removal, open pit mining and downstream effects on water quality and quantity. Alberta has benefited for over 40 years from the conservative 1976 Coal Policy that protected sensitive areas of the Eastern Slopes from open pit mining. Your government rescinded the Coal Policy in June 2020, thereby opening these sensitive areas to coal dispositions. There is a real possibility of selenium poisoning of the Old Man watershed seriously affecting wildlife, fisheries, drinking water, and agricultural operations downstream of the mine including the City of Lethbridge. Likewise, open pit mining uses massive amounts of fresh water and will significantly reduce the limited fresh water available for downstream agriculture. The opening of new areas to low cost/high profit coal mining also creates an unfair playing field for existing coal mines that have followed the Coal Policy.

If the closed metallurgical mines are no longer economically feasible, they need provincial assistance in reclamation so that recreational activities can reopen on these lands. Our communities economically benefit from the recreational and tourist activities in these sensitive areas of the Eastern Slopes. We believe these sustainable opportunities need further promotion from the provincial government, and are a better use of the sensitive areas than expanding coal mining opportunities.

In closing, the undersigned encourage the provincial government to provide incentives for coal mines to operate existing coal dispositions along the Eastern Slopes, to reinstate a Coal Policy that protects its sensitive landscape, and to reject the disposition of the Grassy Mountain Coal Mine.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Yours truly,

Troy Sorensen, Town Councillor, M.Sc.

CC

Mr. Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks