



**ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION**

*"Defending Wild Alberta through  
Awareness and Action"*

Hon. Peter Kent, P.C., MP  
Minister of Environment  
10 Wellington Street  
Gatineau, Quebec  
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Email: [Minister@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Minister@ec.gc.ca)

August 17, 2011

Minister Kent,

I am writing you on behalf of Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) to bring attention to a disappointing decision, whose legacy will affect Albertan's and all Canadians for years to come. On June 30, 2011, Maxim Power Corp. was given approval by the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) to construct a 500-megawatt supercritical pulverized coal plant in the area of Grande Cache, Alberta.

Along with emitting up to three million tonnes of greenhouse-gases per year, the plant will discharge mercury and other acidifying emissions into the air (SO<sup>2</sup> and NO's), extract at least 6 million m<sup>3</sup> of freshwater annually from the Little Smoky River, and inflict further industrial impacts upon sensitive ecosystems adjacent to the project location.

Apart from the substantial environmental footprint associated with this expansion, we are especially concerned with the expedited manner in which this approval was given. It seems decisions made by the AUC, as well as alleged advice given by Environment Canada, have assisted Maxim Power in avoiding new federal carbon legislation and constructing a non-compliant coal plant. Approval of this plant will prevent the province from achieving its target greenhouse-gas reductions, and will also make it difficult for Prime Minister Stephen Harper to achieve his promise to reduce Canadian greenhouse-gas emissions 17 per cent by 2020.

Though we realize new federal regulations regarding coal-fired electricity generation will not come into effect until 2015, we were assured by statements made by former Minister of Environment Prentice that in the meantime, non-compliant coal plants would not be expedited: "We will guard against any rush to build non-compliant coal plants in the interim."

In contrast to this statement, a letter written by Maxim Power to the AUC indicated the proposed federal regulations were of extreme concern, but that they were assured by Environment Canada that the plant would fall under existing rules if commissioned by July 1, 2015. In this letter, Maxim indicated that it would be difficult to meet this deadline if the commission's decision was delayed by

hearings. In response to these requests, interim approval was quickly given to Maxim Power by the AUC. This was followed soon after by final approval.

AWA, along with several other concerned parties, were denied standing by the AUC and as such, were unable to trigger a hearing. Thus, we urge Environment Canada to rigorously review Maxim Power's application and ensure promises made to Canadians are reflected by government action.

In 2007, Mr. Harper committed to ensure 90 per cent of Canada's electricity would be generated from non-emitting sources by 2020, and committed to 2020 greenhouse-gas reduction targets. We welcomed the announcement of new federal carbon legislation in 2010, as it seemed verbal commitments to climate change action were being reflected in legislation.

We hope the federal government will use the tools at its disposal to respond to this approval, and take advantage of this opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to promised climate change action. The reputation of Canada, particularly Alberta, as lagging in environmental regulations, monitoring and enforcement will remain in the international spotlight.

We appreciate the steps your ministry has taken to move away from coal-fired electricity generation in Canada. Please do not delay in responding to this important matter. We look forward to hearing from you,

Sincerely,



Madeline Wilson  
Conservation Specialist

c.c. Hon. Ed Stelmach, Premier of Alberta [Premier@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Premier@gov.ab.ca)  
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