



ALBERTA
ENERGY

*Office of the Minister
Deputy Government House Leader
MLA, Peace River*

November 3, 2014

AR20290

Ms. Brittany Verbeek
Conservation Specialist
Alberta Wilderness Association
Box 6398 Station D
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E1

Dear Ms. Verbeek,

Thank you for your letter of October 10, 2014 voicing your organization's concerns regarding potential changes to the 1976 *Coal Development Policy for Alberta* (1976 Coal Policy). I assure you that I take the concerns you have seriously.

The Government of Alberta has embarked upon a new approach to land use management with the release of the Provincial Land-use Framework in 2008. The key piece of the framework is to set the context for the development of seven regional plans for Alberta. Regional planning aims to strike a balance between environmental, economic, and social outcomes on an increasingly crowded landscape, and provides new techniques for managing that landscape. The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), which came into force September 1, 2014, reaffirms a commitment by the Government of Alberta to ensure the responsible development of our natural resources.

Specifically in regards to your concerns about the SSRP, the Government of Alberta has committed through the SSRP to review the coal categories established by the 1976 Coal Policy in conjunction with a review of the Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) within the boundaries of the region. The outcome is intended to be that regional plans and associated tools developed under regional plans (e.g., biodiversity management framework, linear footprint management, access management planning) will supersede the coal land classifications from the 1976 Coal Policy and provide updated clarity about where exploration and development of all mineral resources, including coal, can and cannot occur.

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Ms. Brittany Verbeek

The process for conducting the administrative review for the IRPs and coal categories within the SSRP area is being finalized. Where policy or plan amendments are recommended, conversations with affected stakeholders will be arranged to confirm opportunities and interests, and gain support for the path forward. I encourage you and members of your association to continue to participate in and provide input to this and all regional planning processes.

I would like to thank you for your kind words of congratulation and I look forward to a continued dialogue with you as we move forward on these complex issues.

Sincerely,



Frank Oberle
Minister

cc: Gerri Protti, Chairman, Alberta Energy Regulator
Honourable Kyle Fawcett, Minister, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development