

Stop Work, Consult: Alberta Needs Public Hearings on the Future of Alberta's Eastern Slopes

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Last week, Premier Kenney's Director of Strategic Planning was reported to have written that some of the strip-mining restrictions in the 1976 Coal Policy "[will be restored](#)." Alberta Wilderness Association wants to be encouraged by this news. AWA hopes the firestorm of opposition the Kenney government has faced over rescinding that policy has convinced the government to restore restrictions. To that end, the Energy Minister should:

- instruct the AER to halt immediately the issuing of coal exploration permits along Alberta's Eastern Slopes (pursuant to section 67 of Alberta's *Responsible Energy Development Act*).
- instruct the AER to issue a directive saying that, until further notice, no coal mining applications in Alberta's Rockies and Foothills will be considered by the Regulator (pursuant to section 67 of Alberta's *Responsible Energy Development Act*).

Furthermore, the Premier should:

- establish an expert review panel on the Future of Alberta's Rockies and Headwaters to study and recommend what industrial activities should be allowed to apply for permission to operate in Alberta's Rockies and Foothills. Public hearings throughout Alberta should be part of that Review Panel's mandate.
- impose a moratorium on all coal development in Alberta's Rockies and Foothills until the Review Panel completes its investigations and the government responds to the Commission's recommendations with legislation.

"Tens of thousands of Albertans are calling on the Kenney government to reinstate the Coal Policy," said Ian Urquhart, AWA Conservation Director. "The Premier must take those concerns seriously and propose consultative, legislative, and regulatory measures to respond meaningfully to what Albertans have said about a landscape that sits near the heart of the province's identity."

The public record shows clearly that Alberta only consulted with the coal mining industry about its decision to rescind the Coal Policy. The province currently is in court arguing that, since the Coal Policy wasn't a law, "it can be rescinded unilaterally by Alberta Energy at any time." AWA and a host of parties have applied to intervene in that [case](#). A common thread joins all parties together – government had a duty to consult and failed to carry it out.

Establishing an expert review panel with public hearings would show that the government recognizes the need to consult seriously and broadly with Albertans about the future of one of Alberta's most cherished landscapes. "Metallurgical coal has rested in Alberta's Eastern Slopes for millennia," said Urquhart. "It can continue to rest there, undisturbed, while a provincial review panel carefully studies all ramifications of what the possibility of inviting coal companies to the Eastern Slopes will mean."

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