

## **Coal Consultation Terms of Reference: A Staggering Betrayal of the Public's Trust**

*April 15, 2021*

Today, more than two weeks after Energy Minister Savage announced a coal consultation process, the Government of Alberta quietly posted the Terms of Reference for this consultation. The Terms of Reference clearly are at odds with the “open conversation” where “the widest spectrum of views” would be heard that the government promised Albertans on March 29th. These Terms of Reference, deliberately hidden from the public for more than two weeks, “define out of existence the water and land use concerns thousands of Albertans have about coal mining,” said Ian Urquhart, Alberta Wilderness Association Conservation Director. “They constitute a staggering betrayal of the public’s trust.”

On March 29th Minister Savage promised the consultation would be “an open conversation.” Alberta Wilderness Association took Minister Savage at her word when she said:

"There's definitely not a predetermined outcome. We've said several times this is a coal policy that will be made by Albertans, consultation by Albertans, for Albertans. So we'll be interested in hearing the views of Albertans which will be the basis for a new coal policy going forward. I don't think there's anything at all that's predetermined. The one thing I learned over the last three months is that Albertans have a view, they have a very strong view on coal development and they will tell us what their view is and I think...the consultation is meant in the greatest openness to get those views of Albertans, ensure we understand them and ensure that we move forward following the views of Albertans."

The Terms of Reference unambiguously contradict this statement from her news conference. Instead, those terms instruct the Committee to “focus only on matters related to coal that are under the administration of the Minister of Energy.” Subjects such as water quality, selenium pollution, water allocation, species-at-risk, land-use, recreational impacts, and climate change all are excluded, by definition, from what the Committee is instructed to consult Albertans about.

During the March 29th news conference, Dr. Ron Wallace, the Committee Chair, said the Committee’s “job is to first of all listen to the widest spectrum of people in Alberta...” and that “a lot of the views are going to be based on aesthetics, values, and traditional values...” The Terms of Reference make it very clear that these views and the wide spectrum of Albertans who hold them

are not welcome before the Committee. Since they are outside the purview of the Minister of Energy they are irrelevant to the Minister's understanding of what this consultation should do. They have no place in her "modern" coal policy.

"The terms of reference were written to ignore the vast majority of the concerns Albertans have expressed," said Urquhart. "It's a very disappointing day for people who thought the Kenney government had started on the path to take those concerns seriously."

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