

The Coal Survey Says: Environmental Concerns Trump Economic Benefits...Overwhelmingly

May 18, 2021

For your information: This news release was sent out a few minutes ago

On May 17, 2021 the Alberta government quietly released a summary of the results of the Coal Policy Committee's initial survey. More than two thirds of survey participants (70%) believe exploiting Alberta coal has a major effect on them. All of the effects listed in the summary are negative ones. An equally impressive majority dismissed the economic appeal of strip mining in Alberta. Nearly two-thirds of participants (64.3%) said the economic benefits of coal mining are "not important at all." Only 7.7 percent said the economic benefits of coal mining were very important; only four percent said those benefits were moderately important.

"These results strongly suggest that most Albertans don't want to see coal mining figure anywhere in Alberta's future," said Ian Urquhart, AWA Conservation Director. "They underline emphatically that Albertans don't want to see coal mining in the Rockies and Foothills and that they don't have any confidence in the government's commitment to regulate coal mining in an environmentally responsible manner."

"The results from the government's non-scientific sampling of public opinion mirror what the polling company ThinkHQ reported in February," said Urquhart. ThinkHQ's February 2021 survey of Albertans' attitudes towards coal mining along the Eastern Slopes found that 69 percent of survey respondents disapproved of coal mining in the Rockies, with 49 percent strongly disapproving allowing any mining there.

The geographical distribution of the opposition to coal mining should be a political concern for the Kenney government. Ninety-one percent of the 24,752 participants in the coal committee's survey came from southern or central Alberta. "These areas are bedrocks of UCP electoral support," Urquhart said. "To see such overwhelming, unmitigated opposition to the government's commitment to promoting the coal mining industry should send shivers down the spines of UCP political strategists."

This survey strongly suggests, as ThinkHQ's President Marc Henry concluded in February, that the idea of opening up the Eastern Slopes to coal mining is a politically dangerous self-inflicted wound, reminiscent of the Notley government's carbon tax.

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