

Dear Committee Members

I am a 70 year old who has had some experience with the coal industry at various stages in my life. My parents lived in Mountain Park AB after WWII and my older brother was born there. The mine had shut down, and the family had moved to Edmonton by the time of my arrival in 1951. I have lived in the Edson district for 40 years, and have worked at both the Luscar Sterco Coal Valley mine, and at the Obed Mtn Coal mine during my working career.

Although I am not sure how what I have to say fits into the myopically narrow terms of reference that the Coal Policy Committee has been instructed to follow, I still have to say it.

<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/coal-policy-committee-terms-of-reference.pdf>

The bigger picture of coal mining effects must be considered. Anything less is unrepresentative, incomplete, inaccurate, and irresponsible.

I have concerns about further coal mine development on many fronts, with environment and landscape changes being the most important. And of those two, I think the water aspect of environment is the single biggest concern; where does it come from, where does it go, and what happens to it in-between?

I ask if there is a PROVEN water purification technology, that can be demonstrated as effective in this application? This must be demonstrated before any mine developers are even considered for permission to proceed. They can't move forward with only a technological 'wish-list' of emerging and/or unproven procedures to support their requirement to discharge only clean water. How much water will be lost simply to evaporation? Isn't all this water already needed for maintaining the native fishery, and also downstream, pre-existing uses? What about low precipitation years?

I am concerned about chemicals leaching into our watershed waters as a result of the exposure of layers of previously buried rock to water passage and wind erosion, as well as the coal processing chemicals that may also get discharged. I am aware that mines in the Coal Branch have been previously identified as generating/liberating selenium, calcite, and other chemicals in levels many times beyond acceptable limits, leaching them into adjacent streams and rivers. In studies in the late 1990's, information from Coal Branch mining was reported by the Alberta Fish and Wildlife and the Alberta Environment departments of the day, but in my search of the [alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca) website, and consultation with AEP water specialists, I can't find any follow-up actions, or reporting since 2005. How can this be?

Beyond water, we have to consider the massive change to the landscape...'moving mountains' if you will...or more aptly, tearing them down. The radical changes to the

landscape will cause all kinds of unforeseen problems and 'accidents'. We have witnessed these events many times before, I remember Obed 2013. I cannot believe what Mt. Cheviot looks like currently, it certainly doesn't resemble the rest of the Rockies, and every time I go to Hinton, I see the gash on Obed Mountain. Not a pristine picture.

I look at the Alberta Department of Energy's Coal Royalties Report from 2019 and see the industry paid a total of under \$15,000,000 (including both thermal and metallurgical mining) in royalty payments...pocket change for the needs of this province's treasury.

I look at the struggles that the nearby town of Hinton is going through currently, with 300 mine workers laid off/unemployed, while the recent Big Horn Mining Coalspur operation (their employer) has declared itself insolvent after about a year of operation. Look at Grande Cache, look at Edson, look anywhere in the Coal Branch, I don't think there is a working coal miner in west central Alberta. It seems to be the nature of the coal industry. Boom Bust Boom Bust, and the local economy turns into a yoyo.

The landscape may (or may not) be being reconstructed into a new and artificial topography covered with non-native plants, causing many environmental changes, including health issues with the fauna that now reside on the mine sites. There is a rich history in Alberta of coal mine operators walking away from failing mines, doing no reclamation at all (Tent Mtn?).

I often hear our current government politicians saying we have nothing to worry about, to trust the process, referring to 'Alberta's strict regulations and highest environmental standards'. Horse Feathers! I look at the AER, who will be charged with issuing a licence to mine to each operator, and have to wonder, where is the oversight and who is responsible for monitoring and reporting, and eventually 'reclamation'. I have no confidence in the AER's ability or motivation, as has been demonstrated by the oil and gas industry, leaving behind their obligations. We've already got an orphan well problem, and we certainly don't need more orphan mines.

I am trying to think of what might possibly be a positive outcome from new mine development, and I am not coming up with anything of any value. Sure, there would probably be a couple of hundred mine jobs, but for how long? And from my own experience, being in the Edson area while mines developed in the Coal Branch in the 1970's to 1990's, the trained mining community is a transient workforce that comes from all points of the compass and countries of the world, for this work. There may be some jobs for locals, but the total employment numbers being quoted will be available to some area people with experience, many will go to workers

immigrating here from other provinces and around the world. When the mine closes, these people will be moving on.

So i ask myself again, where is the value in tearing down the mountains and potentially ruining our waters, which once done, is irreparable? There is none!

Thank you for reading this.

Brian Ficht
Albertan