Notifications

COVID-19: State of public health emergency. Mandatory measures remain in effect provincewide.

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Government news
Feb 08, 2021

Alberta's 1976 coal policy reinstated

Alberta's government is reinstating the 1976 coal policy after hearing concerns raised by Albertans about surface mining in the Eastern Slopes.

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This includes reinstating the four coal categories, which dictated where and how coal leasing, exploration and development could occur.

Further, the Minister of Energy has issued a directive to the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) so that:

- No mountaintop removal will be permitted and all of the restrictions under the 1976 coal categories are to apply, including all restrictions on surface mining in Category 2 lands.
- All future coal exploration approvals on Category 2 lands will be prohibited pending widespread consultations on a new coal policy.

"Albertans have spoken loud and clear and we have heard them. Not only will we reinstate the full 1976 coal policy, we will implement further protections and consult with Albertans on a new, modern coal policy. Alberta's government is absolutely committed to protecting the majestic Eastern Slopes and the surrounding natural environment."

Sonya Savage, Minister of Energy

Quick facts

- Applying for or obtaining a coal lease in no way allows for exploration or development. It merely gives a company the ability to "stake a claim" to the minerals below.
- All proposed coal projects continue to be subject to stringent review by the AER. In many cases, federal impact assessment and joint federal-provincial review also occur. Projects can only proceed if approved through these rigorous regulatory processes and adhere to all existing laws and regulations.
- Current exploration on Category 2 lands will continue, as per the 1976 coal policy. Of the six coal projects currently being explored on Category 2 lands, four began exploration under the 1976 coal policy. Two applications were approved after the 1976 coal policy was rescinded.
- Coal lease sales on Category 2 lands remain paused.

Multimedia

- Watch the news conference
- Listen to the news conference

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