

STOP COAL



Credit: Bruno D. Rodrigues

Coal is the “dirtiest” of the fossil fuels—gas, oil, and coal—because it releases the most global warming pollution when burned. Emissions released by burning fossil fuels over the past 150 years have already raised the average global temperature by 0.8 degrees Celsius.

Why are we taking this action now?

We face a climate catastrophe if we don't take immediate action to cut the pollution that is causing global warming.¹ If the atmosphere continues to heat up, positive feedbacks, such as methane and carbon dioxide releases from melting permafrost will cause global warming to spiral out of our control.

Solid scientific evidence establishes that we must avoid raising average global temperatures more than 2.0 degrees Celsius (2°C) above pre-industrial levels.² Emissions released by burning fossil fuels over the past 150 years have already raised the average global temperature by 0.8 degrees. Even if we stop this pollution entirely, today, the lag between emissions and warming means at least a further 0.5°C increase is inevitable.³

If we are to avoid disaster, there is simply no more time for half measures, green washing or denial. We must

immediately cut back on the pollution that causes global warming.

Why single out coal?

Coal is the “dirtiest” of the fossil fuels (gas, oil, coal) – it releases the most global warming pollution when burned. We may be able to avoid overheating the earth too much if we work hard to wean ourselves off oil and gas as soon as possible, but if we continue to burn coal our hopes for stopping runaway global warming are dashed. It's that simple.

What does this have to do with BC?

Each year a small number of companies export huge amounts of coal from BC. When burned overseas, this coal releases immense quantities of carbon dioxide, the major global warming pollutant. In 2008, nine companies



BC exports ever growing amounts of US coal, helping make Roberts Bank coal port the biggest exporter of global warming pollution in North America.

mined enough coal in BC to virtually double our province's total officially acknowledged emissions of global warming pollution.⁴ 18 more coal mines are planned for BC.

The biggest reason our government continues to cater to the coal companies is the royalties it receives, projected to be about \$230 million dollars in 2010.⁵ Coal royalties accounted for nearly half of all mining revenues in BC in 2008.⁶

On the face of it, the revenue generated by coal mining may seem like a good thing, but our children and environment will pay heavily down the road if the world does not stop burning coal. Therefore, we must break our government's addiction to revenues from this deadly global warming pollution.

BC also exports an ever increasing amount of US thermal coal, from Roberts Bank near Vancouver and Ridley Terminal in Prince Rupert. Roberts Bank is the single largest exporter of global warming pollution in North America. These exports bring no benefits to BC and hasten the climate crisis.

BC: A leader in the fight against global warming?

How do we square our enormous coal exports with BC's image as a leader in the fight against global warming? We can't. BC's exports of coal are helping to cook the planet.

Real leaders take responsibility for their actions. Individuals, families and communities are all taking steps to cut their emissions of global warming pollution. We need our government to do the same. However, it continues to encourage coal mining and to profit from the coal royalties it collects, even though it knows full well that burning coal is disastrous for people and the planet. What the government and the coal companies are doing is wrong! Coal revenues are, in effect, blood money made at the expense of people's lives - today and long into the future.

Where does BC's coal go? What is it used for?

Virtually all of BC's coal is exported to China and the European Union. While all of it is burned and contributes to climate change, most of it is used to produce new steel rather than to generate electricity.

This creates a predicament because steel is used to build things like wind turbines to produce clean green energy.

Fortunately, recycling steel doesn't require coal, just electricity, which can come from hydro or other sources – so we can get ourselves out of this box by:

- Putting priority on using steel for things needed in the transition to a near zero carbon emission economy
- Buying and consuming less stuff to decrease demand for new steel
- Putting pressure on industry to find ways to make new steel that don't require coal.

What are we calling on government to do?

The urgency of the climate crisis means that any delay in taking action to reduce emissions is utterly irresponsible. Dramatic changes in government policy can and must be made immediately. We are calling on our government to do three things to help avert the coming global warming crisis:

- 1. Prohibit the development of new coal mines in BC, starting now, and**
- 2. Reduce coal production in BC to zero by 2015, and**

3. End the export of US coal through BC immediately.

How do we end the age of coal while building a better BC for everyone?

We believe that this 5 year phase out period will give us time to achieve a Just Transition for workers and families in coal-dependent communities, while also ensuring that we reduce coal-related emissions quickly, in keeping with the urgency of the climate crisis.

Measures which address the global warming pollution problem — things like redesigning our cities, our transportation and food infrastructures, and developing renewable energy sources — are all labour intensive. By investing heavily in these measures to reduce pollution while also providing retraining opportunities for workers in BC's coal mining sector, we can more than compensate for the jobs lost from eliminating coal mining.

In fact, given current demographic trends, the biggest constraint on a just transition to a low emission economy will be a shortage of workers — not a shortage of jobs. In effect, making a commitment to stopping global warming pollution would be a massive job creation scheme for BC.

Ending coal mining in BC won't be easy, but it is necessary. The good news is that doing so will present us with immense new opportunities, if we have the courage to seize them. Together, workers, communities, First Nations and the provincial government can jump start a new full

employment economy, one that will create decent jobs and revitalize communities as we transform BC into a near zero carbon emission society. To this end, government should:

1. Immediately remove all subsidies to fossil fuel development and production; and
2. Commit to a major shift in investment to energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy and green jobs; and
3. Engage in development of “Just Transition” plans for the shift to sustainable communities. These transition plans must incorporate funding for education and training, income support, and mobility allowances.

What are we doing to make this happen?

We're calling for a meeting with Premier Clarke. We want to work with her to develop a BC jobs plan that is truly sustainable, and not just based on selling off our resources. We intend to meet with individual MLA's from both parties to explain our actions and ask for their support in ending the age of coal and saving our planet.

Just as important, we will meet with labour leaders, as well as workers and leaders in resource communities, to talk about how we can work with them to ensure a Just Transition to a post-fossil fuel economy and a near zero carbon emission society as we scale back production and export of coal.

We will meet with First Nations leaders and representatives of environmental and social justice groups to identify common interests and ways we can work together in support of our common goals.



Credit: Stella Blu

Given current demographic trends, the biggest constraint on a just transition to a low emission economy will be a shortage of workers — not a shortage of jobs.

What is a “just transition”?

A **just transition** to a greener economy requires an aggressive, sustained commitment of provincial resources to create and retain good jobs and to educate and train current and future workers.

Assistance must be provided for workers, families or communities that may be adversely affected by economic transition, and a democratic voice for workers in their workplaces and communities.

What you can do to help keep coal in the ground

Climate change isn't going to go away unless we all step up and demand action. If we work together we can show government that there is strong support for real change. Your actions will make a difference – please join us in calling for an end to coal. Here's how to help:

- 1. Please sign our petition, and encourage family, friends, neighbours and coworkers to sign it as well! We need to be able to show government that there is broad support for keeping coal in the ground.**
- 2. Tell government what you think! Please contact your MLA and political leaders directly to tell them that you support the phasing out of coal production and export, as well as the Just Transition to a zero-emission society.⁷**
- 3. Help spread the work and build awareness! The more people who know about BC's dirty secret, the more support we will have for ending the age of coal. Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed for your local paper, hosting an evening event to discuss the issue, or holding a rally outside your MLA's office to call on them to support the phase out of coal in BC.**

Ending the coal age: We are not alone!

Citizens all around the world are calling on their governments to end the age of coal. People everywhere are coming to the same conclusion: If we are to

avoid a climate catastrophe and keep our planet safe and healthy, then coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel there is, can't be burned and has to stay in the ground.

In Ontario activists are calling on government to phase out coal-fired power this year, a move they say would be the single largest greenhouse gas reduction in North America – equivalent to taking nearly 7 million cars off the road.⁸

In the United States a network of community groups claims to have stopped construction of 115 coal fired power plants, and aims to shut down the 500 already in operation, calling it the single most effective thing we can do to fight global warming.⁹

In Australia, activists are working to end the mining, burning and export of coal – all at the same time.¹⁰

To find out about other groups taking action on coal around the world, go here: http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Citizen_groups_working_on_coal_issues

Our future is in our hands and it is time to act

BC is at a crossroads. We can't be a global warming leader while at the same time profiting from the leading source of global warming destruction – coal. To pretend both is to live a lie. The choice is ours. We can start building a fair, safe and secure future based on conservation, efficiency and green energy, or we can continue the destruction of our planet and our children's future.

Please get involved and help us build a better future – sign the petition, donate your time and money to this cause, call on government to keep coal in the ground. Together we can start the transition to a green, sustainable society.

“IF WE ARE TO AVOID A CLIMATE CATASTROPHE.. COAL HAS TO STAY IN THE GROUND.”

Endnotes

1. The primary pollutants are greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels. These include carbon dioxide (CO₂) methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O).
2. For a good summary of the science on this topic, see *Storms of My Grandchildren*, by James Hansen. New York: Bloomsbury, 2009; and *Keeping Our Cool* by Andrew Weaver; Viking Canada 2008.
3. Target Atmospheric CO₂: Where Should Humanity Aim? James Hansen, Makiko Sato, Pushker Kharecha, David Beerling, Valerie Masson-Delmotte, Mark Pagani, Maureen Raymo, Dana Royer, James C. Zachos; <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2009/11/25/2753561>.
4. Calculation based on data from Rock Solid, *The BC Mining Industry in 2008* by PriceWaterhouseCoopers and NIR, by Natural Resources Canada, 2007; In 2008 BC's coal exports totalled more than 26 million tonnes; When burned, this coal released over 55 Mt (million tonnes) of CO₂ into the atmosphere. If this were counted as part of BC's emissions it would almost double the officially acknowledged 63 megatonnes emissions we produced here at home in 2007.
5. Budget and Fiscal Plan, 2010; Ministry of Finance, Government of BC.
6. Price Waterhouse Cooper Rock Solid, *the Mining industry in BC in 2008*
7. <http://www.leg.bc.ca/Mla/3-1-1.htm>
8. <http://www.cleanairalliance.org/files/active/0/phaseout%20progress%202010.pdf>
9. <http://coalswarm.typepad.com/coalswarm/about-coalswarm.html>
10. <http://www.risingtide.org.au/>