



February 9, 2016

The Honourable Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Minister McKenna:

We are writing to you as a consortium of health groups who are mindful of the importance of optimizing the health of Canadians, while protecting the environment that our children will inherit. As you know, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared climate change to be the greatest public health threat of the 21st century.¹ As the Government of Canada works to develop a plan to meet commitments made at the Conference of Paris in 2015, we strongly recommend that you place a high priority on reducing one source of emissions: coal.

We urge you to revise the federal regulations on coal-fired power plants to phase out coal plants across the country within a 10-year time frame. This is a time frame supported by all members of our consortium and is consistent with a resolution passed by the Canadian Medical Association (CMA).² Taking this action will create health benefits for Canadians, while also substantially reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.

Some provinces have already made great advances on this front. Between 2004 and 2014, the Province of Ontario closed down all six of its coal-fired power plants. In so doing, it cut Ontario's emissions of greenhouse gases by 20%. At the same time, it reduced the province's emissions of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and mercury by 23%, 14%, and 23% respectively.³ The coal phase-out in Ontario has contributed to significant improvements in air quality and human health in Ontario. Smog alert days have steadily declined from 53 days in 2005 to zero days in 2014 and 2015. In 2014, Toronto Public Health reported that Ontario's improved air quality was preventing 400 premature deaths and 2,450 hospitalizations in Toronto each year.⁴

In November of 2015, the Alberta government announced that it will phase out the six coal-fired power plants in Alberta by 2030. With this decision, Alberta will be reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 17%, while significantly reducing emissions of air pollutants, improving human health, and producing health benefits worth at least \$300 million per year.⁵

We know that all provinces want the best health for their citizens, but Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia currently intend to have power plants burning coal well into the 2040s. By tightening federal regulations on coal-fired power plants, the Government of Canada would be taking an important step towards creating the healthy energy environment that will keep Canadian kids with asthma out of emergency rooms today, while providing them with the stable climate they require to thrive into the future. This would also help the Federal Government to achieve commitments made in Paris.

We would very much like the opportunity to discuss this with you in person at your earliest convenience. We look forward to your response and to the prospect of a major win for Canadian's health and climate safety.

Yours Sincerely,



Kim Perrotta, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment



Ian Culbert, Executive Director, Canadian Public Health Association



Debra Lynkowski, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Canadian Lung Association



Noah Farber, Acting President & CAO, Asthma Society of Canada

References:

1. World Health Organization. WHO calls for urgent action to protect health from climate change <http://www.who.int/globalchange/global-campaign/cop21/en/>
2. CMA. 2014 Resolutions Passed By CMA General Council. URL?
3. Ontario Public Health Association. 2002. Beyond Coal: Power, Public Health and the Environment. <http://cape.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Beyond Coal - Power Public Health and the Environment.pdf>
4. Toronto Public Health. 2014. Path To Healthier Air: Toronto Air Pollution Burden of Illness Update. <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Toronto%20Public%20Health/Healthy%20Public%20Policy/Report%20Library/PDF%20Reports%20Repository/2014%20Air%20Pollution%20Burden%20of%20Illness%20Tech%20RPT%20final.pdf>
5. Pembina Institute, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), The Asthma Society of Canada, and the Lung Association of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. 2013. A Costly Diagnosis: Subsidizing coal power with Albertans' Health. <http://www.pembina.org/pub/2424>

Copies to:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Dr. Jane Philpott, P.C., M.P., Minister of Health