



Health organizations call for phase-out of Canada's coal plants

TORONTO (June 14, 2016) – A coalition of 15 Canadian health organizations are asking the federal-provincial-territorial working group that is addressing specific climate mitigation opportunities, including in the electricity sector, to close all of Canada's coal-fired power plants by 2025.

Health professionals consider coal plants to be a critical health issue because: they are a significant source of greenhouse gases that are causing climate change; they are a major source of air pollutants that have been clearly linked to heart and lung diseases; and they are an important source of mercury, a toxic pollutant that accumulates in the aquatic food chain where it can harm the mental development of our children.

“There are 14 coal-fired power plants left in Canada; six in Alberta, three in Saskatchewan, four in Nova Scotia and one in New Brunswick” said **Kim Perrotta, Executive Director for the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)**. “Collectively, they are responsible for 8.5% of Canada's greenhouse gases. Twelve are among the country's 25 highest emitters of sulphur dioxide and two are the country's highest emitters of mercury.”

“The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared “climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century,” said **Dr. Courtney Howard, Board Member with CAPE**. “The WHO estimates that climate change will claim the lives of at least 250,000 people each year by 2030 unless we take dramatic steps to reduce emissions today.”

“Globally, coal plants are responsible for 43% of all energy-related emissions of greenhouse gases” said **Ian Culbert, Executive Director of the Canadian Public Health Association**.

“Canada must press for global coal phase-out but cannot do so if it has not demonstrated leadership at home.”

“Everything we breathe in has an impact on our lungs. The air pollution from coal plants has been clearly linked to increased rates of lung disease, and closing the plants will improve the lung health of many Canadians,” said **Debra Lynkowski, President and CEO of The Canadian Lung Association**.

“The closure of Canada’s coal-fired power plants will allow those living with asthma to breathe easier, reducing asthma symptoms and exacerbations and potentially a decline in the development of the disease itself.” said **Vanessa Foran, President and CEO of the Asthma Society of Canada**.

“Closing these remaining major long-range sources of neurotoxic mercury will prevent prenatal and early life exposures that have subtle, but serious, effects on learning abilities and behaviour for many children , and will improve their chances for success and economic productivity,” said **Barbara McElgunn, Health Policy Advisor, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC)**

"The pollution from the six coal-fired plants Ontario used to generate electricity resulted in approximately 600 premature deaths and 900 hospital admissions in 2005," said **Dr. Doris Grinspun, Chief Executive Officer of the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO)**. “With their phase-out, levels of air pollution in the province have declined dramatically along with health-related impacts."

“In Alberta, the phase-out of six coal-fired power plants is expected to produce health benefits worth about \$300 million per year,” offered **Dr. Joe Vipond**, emergency room physician in Calgary and **CAPE member**. “Imagine what we could achieve if we phased out the 8 coal-fired power plants in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan as well”.

“Saskatchewan is not gifted with the water opportunities for hydro-electricity that exist in other provinces, but we have remarkable wind, solar, and biomass potential, and can do more to improve energy efficiency” said **Wanda Martin, Interim President, Saskatchewan Public Health Association (SPHA)**.

Contact:

Kim Perrotta, Executive Director

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)

905-628-9437