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Accelerated coal phase-out would save Albertan lives

Report from health associations and Pembina Institute outlines health benefits of a quick end to burning coal

CALGARY — Speeding the rate of the coal phase-out would benefit Albertans' health and would even save lives, according to a joint report from the Pembina Institute, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Lung Association of Alberta and NWT, and the Asthma Society of Canada.

Breathing in the benefits: How an accelerated coal phase-out can reduce health impacts and costs for Albertans, highlights the benefits of shutting down Alberta's 18 coal-fired units in a stepwise fashion between now and the province's current 2030 target date.

The report is based upon research conducted by Environment Canada and is a follow-up to *A Costly Diagnosis*, a 2013 collaborative study by the same health associations on the effects coal burning has on the health of Albertans. That study called for an end to using coal fuel to generate electricity. Since then, the Alberta Government has committed to a phase-out by 2030 and the federal government has recently indicated it is considering an accelerated phase-out nationwide.

Quick facts

- Coal power causes 92 premature deaths in Alberta every year, and costs associated with health outcomes are as much as \$460 million.
- An accelerated coal phase out as proposed by the Pembina Institute would more than double the health and cost benefits associated with the previous federal regulation in Alberta between 2015 and 2035:
 - Such a phase out would prevent an estimated 600 premature deaths, 500 ER visits, and 80,000 asthma episodes.
 - Avoided negative health outcomes would equal a value of \$3 billion over the period.

Quotes

“We live in a province where, every year, there are nearly as many people killed from coal power emissions as there are homicides. While we praised the government for announcing a phase out, it is now imperative we move quickly with an ambitious retirement schedule.”

— *Joe Vipond, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment*

“Doctors agree that coal power is a health hazard from start to finish. By speeding up the rate of the phase out, Alberta could spare as many as 600 lives and save \$3 billion in associated costs.”

— *Leigh Allard, President & CEO, The Lung Association, Alberta and NWT*

“Alberta has come a long way from environmental laggard to being among the group of countries committed to a coal phase-out by 2030. Its leadership has been recognized by the federal government and it is paving the way for a national coal phase-out.”

— *Andrew Read, Senior Analyst, Pembina Institute*

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Visit the Pembina Institute’s website to download a copy of *Breathing In the Benefits*

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Background

Report: [A Costly Diagnosis \(2013\)](#)

Briefing note: [Early coal phase-out does not require compensation \(2015\)](#)