

Vista Coal Mine Phase II Project  
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada  
9700 Jasper Avenue, Suite 1145  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4C3  
Telephone: 780-495-2037  
Email: [vistamine-minevista@iaac-aeic.gc.ca](mailto:vistamine-minevista@iaac-aeic.gc.ca)

The Honorable Steven Guibeault MP  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
200 Sacre'-Coeur Boulevard  
Gateneau QC K1A 0H3

September 26, 2024

Dear Honorary Mr. Guibeault, Minister of Environment & Climate Change, Canada,

Universal Railway Operations (URO) is a relatively small third-party provider of railway services to seven different clients located at 10 sites in Alberta and British Columbia. Coalspur is one of these clients. Since 2019, URO has inspected, repaired and loaded with coal all 1,139 trains that entered and departed the site. We are writing this letter to lend our voice of support to Coalspur's Vista Mine and the Phase II extension project.

The Canadian National Railway is the service provider responsible for delivering and pulling trains from the site. Everything that happens to the trains while they are at the site is performed by one of the 10 employees working for URO. We are the only company Coalspur has trusted to handle their trains. We believe they engaged our services in the first place because we proposed a superior operating model at a fair rate and continue to use our services because they appreciate our reliability for which we charge a fair rate.

We value Coalspur as a client because they genuinely see us a partner in their supply chain. Rather than treat us as a contractor performing a service they could easily have somebody else perform should they choose, they treat us as a partner. Like a good partnership, we treat each other in such a way that transcends strict language in our agreement. For example, the mine has the right to invoke a *force majeure* when there is a disruption in train traffic for reasons beyond their control. Between strikes at the railway, wildfires, slides, derailments, etc., there have been many instances where the number of trains Coalspur pays us to handle have been roughly half (if not less) than what we are contracted to handle. Just as recently as July and August of this year, we processed under half the trains we are paid to handle. Yet, Coalspur paid the full bill, as they always have. This shows us we are valued beyond being an interchangeable contractor. Another example of Coalspur going above what our contract requires is when they granted protection under the CCAA in 2021. Despite not receiving any revenue from shipping any coal for nearly three months, Coalspur found a way to still see URO was paid for its services. It was ironic that something that could sour a relationship between our respective companies only strengthened our bond as it showed to us what a good partner Coalspur was. We could provide more examples, but it should be clear that Coalspur values URO as a trusted partner, and we see them the same in turn.

We believe it is important that Coalspur be permitted the Phase II extension so that they are able to continue to ship coal as they have. We handle roughly 5 trains a week for Coalspur. As noted, this allows us to employ 10 fulltime employees. The Phase II extension, we understand, will permit Coalspur to ship more or less the same

**Universal Rail Systems**

3403 74 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB T6B 3B8  
Tel: 780.400.4104 Fax: 780.449.3800 [www.universalarail.com](http://www.universalarail.com)

amount of coal they do today. Between this, along with the fact they pay us the same amount every month regardless if CN delivers the number of trains we are contracted to load or not, we are able to guarantee regular wages for our workers. With the exception of one of our employees who lives in Jasper, all are part of the local economy. They all are paid good wages and receive no less than their guaranteed amount every month. The Phase II extension will ensure these workers and their families are supported for years to come. We experience very little turnover of staff, which to us indicates our workers value their jobs.

In conclusion, URO hopes it is able to continue to work and load trains at Coalspur's railhead for its Vista mine. We are very proud of the number of trains we processed without incident in the past five years and even more proud to be performing this valuable service for our trusted partner, Coalspur. We understand our tenure at this site and employment opportunities for our staff will be in peril should the Phase II extension not come to be. We appeal to you on behalf of our workers and their families to ensure it is does.

Regards.

<Original signed by>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Mau  
General Manager, Railway Services  
**Universal Rail Systems** | Universal Rail Operations

Direct: 780-449-8055  
Cell: 780-721-8500  
Main: 780-400-4104

[www.universalrail.com](http://www.universalrail.com)