

Vista Coal Mine Phase II Expansion Project

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

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The Honourable Steven Guibeault MP

Minister of Environment and Climate Change

200 Sacre'-Coeur Boulevard

Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3

September 26, 2024

Dear Minister Guibeault,

We write today as residents and/or business owners in Hinton, Alberta, to express our support for the Vista Coal Mine Phase II Expansion Project.

Hinton is a rural community that has a long history centered around the extraction of natural resources, including more than a century of coal mining in and around our town. The Hinton area relies on these industries to sustain our communities and we strongly encourage the federal government to not designate for assessment this project and the estimated 10 years of mining activity and economic impact.

Vista Coal directly employs 460 people with high-paying jobs, and countless other positions through their contractors and suppliers, most of whom call Hinton home. Hinton has around 10,000 people and an estimated 3,000 households and we ask the Minister to consider the impact of potentially losing more than 400 families in a town our size, which is a looming reality as Phase 1 progresses to completion and Phase II faces additional delays.

Back in 2020, Vista Coal's kick off of Phase I helped mitigate the community impacts from the closure of the Teck Coal Cheviot Mine operation, absorbing much of that operation's work force and continuing the community support that the coal industry has shown since the early 1900s. Cheviot was closed because it had run its course, that is the nature of this volatile industry and our community can accept those realities.

However, Vista Coal has a viable phase that has twice been designated under the Impact Assessment Act, and both times the federal courts have set that designation aside. Approval of Phase II has been delayed several years already, and we understand that a new request for designation has been submitted Aug. 7 by the Keepers of the Athabasca and the West Athabasca Bioregional Society.

We respect the fact that these organizations are participating in the regulatory process, but as a resident/business in the Hinton area we ask you to honour the court's previous decisions and not

consider designating this project again, causing further uncertainty and delays to a project that is of ultimate importance to the Hinton area.

Besides the previously outlined economic impacts, please also consider the almost 50 non-profit and community groups – from Indigenous groups, to sports organizations and social supports – to which Vista Coal has provided much-needed corporate support.

We understand that your purview is primarily environmental, and with that said please remember that we are a community of hunters and fishers, hikers and mountain bikers, who value the ecosystem and beautiful backyard in which we live. But we have seen this backyard sustained over the centuries in co-existence with crucial economic activity like coal mining, forestry and oil and gas.

Also, from a regulatory perspective, we note Vista Coal outlines that:

- the Phase II portion of the Vista Mine is not a new mining project, rather it is a continuation of the existing mine. As production from the existing Phase I mining area ramps down, production from Phase II will ramp up.
- current production levels will be maintained. The average annual coal production from the Vista Mine will not increase with the Phase II approval.
- Mined areas are progressively reclaimed and the overall disturbance footprint will stay the same as Phase II is mined.

Thanks for your consideration in this matter, and we hope that you will carefully consider the perspectives of Hinton and area residents as part of your deliberations.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Ashley Morin