

October 22, 2024

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

RE: Banning Thermal Coal Exports

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Cc: Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Honourable Anita Anand, President of the Treasury Board and Transport Minister

Our planet is in the midst of a rapidly worsening climate emergency fueled by greenhouse gas emissions. The climate catastrophe knows no borders. Recently, people across Canada have felt the full force of this crisis. From the tragic wildfires that engulfed the town of Jasper, AB, the increasingly frequent and fatal heat domes, to the flooding in major cities like Toronto and Montreal, the climate crisis is having heartbreaking consequences across the country.

As environmental and civil society organizations, we hear the overwhelming chorus of Canadians who are demanding action. They want this government to do everything it can to respond to and to mitigate this crisis.

Ending the use and export of thermal coal is an obvious and necessary component in this response.

As your government knows well, thermal coal is one of the dirtiest fossil fuel contributors to climate change. Coal power generation is the largest single source of global greenhouse gas emissions and one of the first fossil fuels whose use must be phased out. In order to keep the hope of a 1.5 °C future alive, by 2030 the world needs to severely curb its use of thermal coal and OECD countries like Canada must eliminate it altogether.

Ending coal power will also improve the health of millions around the world. Recent reports show that air pollution generated by coal kills more than 800,000 people each year. The extractive origins of thermal coal can also have devastating impacts on lands, waters and local communities, including impacts on Indigenous nations and their inherent rights, including fishing, hunting and gathering.

Considering these realities, Canada needs to finish the job and end all contributions to this high-emitting, deadly form of power generation as soon as possible.

Under your government, Canada has shown leadership and taken strong action against thermal coal. Canada has strengthened regulations to ensure a phase out the use of thermal coal for domestic electricity generation by 2030 and has taken strong regulatory action against the expansion of thermal coal mining. Canada also co-founded the Powering Past Coal Alliance, an organization of over 181 national and sub-national governments, businesses and organizations committed to accelerating the transition away from coal power.

Canada further promised to stop facilitating thermal coal use beyond our borders. Several parties have pledged to end Canada's export of thermal coal as swiftly as possible, including in platforms for the most recent 2021 election. After that election, this government reiterated the promise to end thermal coal exports in its mandate letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Unfortunately, more than three years later, Canada has yet to follow through on this commitment. Since making the promise to ban thermal coal exports, **no progress has been made – in fact, Canada's thermal coal exports are increasing.**

Exports of Canadian mined thermal coal have more than tripled and overall thermal coal exports through Canada have almost doubled since 2015.

Canada cannot claim to be a climate leader while continuing to enable the use of one of the dirtiest and deadliest fossil fuels by exporting it to be burned overseas. Thermal coal exported from or through Canada in 2022 alone caused 40Mt of GHG emissions when burned – more than the domestic emissions of all of Canada's Atlantic provinces combined that year. Canada cannot be a true trailblazer in the fight to power past coal until it bans thermal coal exports.

Fortunately, there is a straight-forward solution that can be implemented before the end of the current mandate by implementing a thermal coal export ban via fit-for-purpose legislation.

We, the undersigned organizations, therefore urgently ask the government to do the following:

- Announce in the 2024 Fall Economic Statement the intention to ban thermal coal exports through legislation in the 2025 Budget Implementation Act.
- Incorporate legislation in the Spring 2025 Budget Implementation Act that bans thermal coal exports within a year of the legislation coming into force.
- Ensure this legislation implements and enforces a ban on thermal coal exports (with minimal exceptions in the case of an imminent threat to health, safety or the environment), and incorporates consultation with potentially impacted trade unions prior to the legislation coming into force.
- Properly consult and accommodate any potentially affected Indigenous nations on the elimination of thermal coal exports so that the transition is equitable for their communities.

Your government's accomplishments in phasing out thermal coal use at home has been a victory for the climate. Yet this record is tarnished by our continued and growing practice of exporting thermal coal. It's time to finish the job and secure this government's legacy as a true leader in the global fight against thermal coal. We cannot do one thing at home and another abroad – Canada must not facilitate the use of this dirtiest and deadliest fossil fuel for electricity generation, domestically or internationally.

Our groups stand ready to support and celebrate legislation banning the export of thermal coal, and any party that supports it.

Mr. Prime Minister - it is time to power past thermal coal once and for all.

Signatories

Ecojustice
Environmental Defence
Climate Action Network – Réseau action climat (CAN-Rac) Canada
Greenpeace Canada
The Council of Canadians
Climate Caucus
Climate Messengers Canada
Ontario Clean Air Alliance
Citizens' Climate Lobby Canada
Shift: Action for Pension Wealth & Planet Health
Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice
Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment
Citizens for Public Justice
Calgary Climate Hub
Windfall Ecology Centre
Friends of the Earth Canada
Chase Environmental Action Society
350 Canada
Equiterre
Ecology Action Centre
West Coast Environmental Law Association
New Westminster Climate Action Hub
Comox Valley Sue Big Oil
MiningWatch
East Kootenay Climate Hub
The View Royal Climate Coalition
First Things First Okanagan
For Our Kids
David Suzuki Foundation
Toronto350
Stand.Earth
Coalition for Responsible Energy Development in New Brunswick (CRED-NB)
Protect Our Winters
Keepers of the Water
WildSight
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment