



February 2, 2021

Hon. Jason Nixon
[Minister of Environment and Parks](#), House Leader
Office of the Minister
323 Legislative Building
10800-97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB, T5K 2B6

Re: North Saskatchewan Regional Plan request for consultation

Dear Minister Nixon,

The [Red Deer River Naturalists Society](#) (RDRN) was incorporated in 1976 but our roots go back to 1898. The objectives of our society include: conservation of natural areas and of species native to Central Alberta; and helping to preventing the abuse of natural resources.

When the Government of Alberta rescinded the 1976 *Coal Development Policy for Alberta* in May 2020, a vast area of sensitive lands was effectively opened-up to surface mining and exploration activities. As a result of this decision, there could be significant and long-term effects on water supplies, ecological integrity and future economic opportunity. Coal development has not been a primary or well-defined factor discussed in the development of a North Saskatchewan Regional Plan, and we are concerned that this important task in the provincial Land Use Framework will not be fulfilled.

From the [Recommendations Document](#) from the North Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council (RAC):
“The review of the coal categories currently by government complicated the discussion for RAC around conservation lands in the Green Area, as there was some hesitancy around providing advice on conserving lands with known coal reserves that government may make available for potential exploration or development.

There was concern, given government had just accepted applications for minor coal exploration in June 2014.

*Government should ensure that the review of the coal categories be **completed before the final NSRP is released** to provide certainty to industry and investors.”*

From the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act*:

“Before a regional plan is made or amended, the Stewardship Minister must
*(a) ensure that **appropriate public consultation** with respect to the proposed regional plan or amendment has been carried out, and present a report of the findings of such consultation to the Executive Council, and*

(b) lay before the Legislative Assembly the proposed regional plan or amendment”

Regional plans need to be inclusive of public values to ensure desirable outcomes for our shared landscape. To date, the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan remains unfinished, and previous public consultation regarding coal development in our region has been inadequate. This unsatisfactory situation has been compounded by the sudden removal of the 1976 Coal policy.

The Red Deer River Naturalists Society respectfully requests that the Government of Alberta reopen the public consultation processes for the North Saskatchewan River Regional Plan and enable the public to comment on the cumulative effects of coal development. It might also be appropriate to extend this process to other regional plans that could be affected by the recent change in policy. A resolution to

that effect from the RDRN membership is attached. This resolution was passed unanimously at our Annual General Meeting on January 28, 2021.

Sincerely,

G. A. (Tony) Blake

President, Red Deer River Naturalists Society

Cc.

Hon. Jason Kenny, [Premier](#)

Hon. Sonja Savage, [Minister of Energy](#)

Hon. Tanya Fir, [Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism](#)

MLA, [Red Deer-North](#)

MLA, [Red Deer-South](#)

MLA, [Innisfail-Sylvan Lake](#)

MLA, [Rimbey-RockyMountainHouse-Sundre](#)

[Red Deer County](#)

[Clearwater County](#)

[Nature Alberta](#)

[Trout Unlimited Canada](#)

[Alberta Wilderness Assn.](#)

[Red Deer Advocate](#)

[CBC News](#)

Resolution presented to the assembled membership of the Red Deer Naturalists Society at the January 28, 2021 Annual General Meeting:

Whereas,

- **the government of Alberta June 1, 2020 has rescinded the 1976 Coal Development Policy,**

and whereas,

- **coal development as a result of this decision could have significant and long-term effects on water supplies, ecological integrity, and future economic opportunity,**

and whereas,

- **the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan of the provincial Land Use Framework remains unfinished**

and whereas,

- **coal development was not a primary factor discussed in the development of regional plans,**

and whereas,

- **coal development plans need to be inclusive of public values to ensure desirable outcomes for our shared landscape,**

the Red Deer River Naturalists Society respectfully requests that the Government of Alberta re-open the public consultation processes for regional plans located along the East Slopes.

The above resolution was passed unanimously.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. A. Blake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

G. A. (Tony) Blake

President, RDRN