

# End the Export of Thermal Coal (February 12, 2023)

## Good Sunday Morning!

I want to start with some good news. I wish this good news were thanks to swift government action, but no. This good news is that the industry itself has decided to stop. Which industry? Well, believe it or not, Canada is the only country on earth to have approved the rearing and sale of genetically modified animals for human consumption. The Prince Edward Island-based company, AquaBounty, **has been selling adult GMO farmed Atlantic salmon**. It announced this week it would stop, but still raise GMO salmon eggs for sale to the US.

For the rest, I decided to concentrate on big bad coal. It is easy to imagine those days of coal are long gone. In 2014, **Ontario completed the shut down its coal plants** in the single largest act to fight climate change. But elsewhere, Canada is still mining, selling and burning coal.

The imperative to go off coal is global. And Canada likes to pretend we are in the lead. Four Canadian provinces still burn coal for electricity – New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Nova Scotia. Alberta is phasing out coal burning, but Nova Scotia still gets most of its electricity from coal. Still, the volume of coal burned in Alberta out paces any other province. Alberta is generating 17,149 gigawatts per hour (GWh), to Nova Scotia's 4,201 GWh, 3,283 GWh for Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick's 706 GWh. (2023 estimates from the Canadian Energy Regulator).

As well, Canada still has 24 permitted coal mines, with 19 in operation. British Columbia has the most (10), followed by Alberta (9), Saskatchewan (3) and Nova Scotia (2).

Personally, it is a mine in Nova Scotia that prompted me to write about coal this morning. When thinking of coal mining, I always think of my friend, the late Rita MacNeil, and her anthem, "Working Man:"

"It's a working man I am  
And I've been down under ground  
And I swear to God if I ever see the sun

Or for any length of time  
I can hold it in my mind  
I never again will go down under ground."

If you have never heard it, [watch it here](#).

It should be our rallying cry against fossil fuels and for renewables. “And I swear to God if I ever see the sun” could be our call for solar.

The Donkin Mine in Cape Breton it is the most recently opened (more accurately re-opened) and the least safe. The Donkin Mine is Canada’s only underground mine — or actually underwater mine, with two tunnels stretching out three kilometres under the Atlantic Ocean.

It had been closed for years when a US-based company with a record of anti-union animus and poor safety record, Kameron Coal, came to Nova Scotia to re-open it. I worked against its re-opening, but it was green lighted by the province. And again, in December 2022, it was [given a new 7-year permit](#) after it closed in March 2020 due to safety issues and low coal prices.

It is [in the news again](#) for a string of safety violations as long as your arm.

‘Extremely dangerous’ safety violations at Canada’s only underground coal mine: [Canada’s National Observer](#).

I well remember the Nova Scotia Department of Mines ignoring the safety violations at Westray. That scandalous tragedy killed 26 men back in 1992. The mine was built due to the political clout of Peter MacKay’s father, Elmer MacKay. The saga is too long for this letter, but it is a tale of deep corruption. The company was always tipped off about department of mines inspections, so the methane levels would be lowered and lime dust spread before inspections. It was the methane underground that caused the mine explosion. The Donkin Mine does not have as inherently unsafe a coal seam as that in Pictou County where the Westray Mine is now a tomb. But the mine management shows a chronic disregard for the safety of the men working there.

In other Canadian coal news, we have the impact of shipping coal out of the Port of Vancouver. It is US coal that is shipped into Canada by rail to be put in bulk carrier freighters and shipped mostly to Asia. Why US coal is shipped out of Vancouver is a story in itself. Out of governmental climate policy, US ports along the Pacific coast have refused to ship coal. In Canada, we have not minded until recently. In the 2021 election, the Liberals pledged to stop exporting thermal coal by 2030.

We should end it now (or yesterday.) The shipment of coal from our ports is not only a climate crime, it is at least half the reason we get freighters up and down the coast of southern Vancouver Island, dropping anchor and damaging our Salish Sea environment. These freighters shipping grain and coal are a nightmare, getting free parking while waiting to be

fully loaded at the Port of Vancouver. The Green Party of Canada has been running a campaign to end the export of thermal coal. If you have not already written to Minister Guilbeault, [please click and get involved!](#)

I hope everyone will have a great week. By the time I write again, maybe the clause by clause review of the amendments to Bill S-5, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act will have wrapped up. Thus far, not one of my amendments has been accepted. Tearing my hair out a bit, but hope springs eternal. [Here is the link to that action campaign.](#)

If you are on Vancouver Island, please join me in two weeks, Saturday February 25th for the big march to save old growth – details are in the P.S. Sending love for your Valentine’s Day moment! Love your sweetheart if you have one, and – if single – do not let the schmaltz of the whole fake holiday get you down! Love the world!

Love to you!!

*Elizabeth*

P.S.

## **Keep your promises – protect old-growth now.**

**Start at Spirit Square (city hall) 12:00 pm – Saturday February 25th – and march to the BC Legislature.**

### **From the organizers:**

**It’s been two years** since the BC NDP government promised to protect old-growth and a paradigm-shift in forest stewardship, but still the most at-risk forests continue to be logged. **No more talk. The time for action is now.**

Over 170 organizations across the education, environment, tourism, and labour sectors have united around the **Declaration for Old Growth**. On February 25th, we’re coming together in person to hold the BC government and new Premier accountable.

This peaceful march and rally will begin at Centennial Square (City Hall) in Victoria at noon, proceeding to the lawn of the Legislature for a rally featuring powerful speakers and performers from 1:30-3:30.

- If you’re on Facebook, [invite your network here.](#)

- If you're a part of an organization, union or business, [sign on to the declaration here](#).

And – **News from Salt Spring Island!** A group of supporters have arranged rental of the new electric school bus to take people to the old-growth march!

*Leave Fulford Harbour on the 9:50 am ferry – meet at the ferry*

*Return on the 5 pm ferry from Swartz Bay*

*Tickets available from Tom Mitchell: 250-653-4353*

*/ [tommymitchell@shaw.ca](mailto:tommymitchell@shaw.ca)*

*Adults – \$15; Kids under 12 years – \$5 – ferry fare included*