



## **Community groups and Coalspur in court today for round two of legal battle over Vista coal mine expansion.**

*Environmental, health and Indigenous organizations across Canada recognize the Vista expansion poses a threat to the climate and Canadians' well-being.*

**Jun 8, 2023 – CALGARY/TERRITORIES OF THE BLACKFOOT AND PEOPLES OF TREATY 7, HOME TO MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA, REGION III** – Ecojustice is in court on behalf of Keepers of the Water Society and the West Athabasca Watershed Bioregional Society to uphold the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's 2021 decision to designate the proposed Vista coal mine expansion for a federal impact assessment.

If built, the Vista coal mine expansion could result in the extraction of up to 15 megatonnes of coal each year. When shipped and consumed abroad, burning this much coal would lead to the release of 33 megatons of carbon into the atmosphere annually – equivalent to the amount of carbon pollution produced by seven million passenger vehicles in one year.

In July 2020, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change decided that the Vista coal mine expansion should undergo a federal impact assessment. This decision was challenged in two separate legal actions in the Federal Court by Coalspur and Ermineskin Cree Nation. In the challenge brought by Ermineskin Cree Nation, the court found that the Minister had failed to adequately consult the First Nation prior to making his decision, and as a result found Coalspur's application to challenge the impact assessment designation moot.

Following consultation with Ermineskin Cree Nation and other First Nations, the Minister redesignated the Vista coal mine expansion for a federal impact assessment. Coalspur is now challenging the Minister's new decision in the Federal Court.

Ecojustice and its clients are in court to ensure that the Vista coal mine expansion project remains designated for a critical impact assessment by the federal government.

According to the UN Environment Program, global coal development must decline by 11 per cent per year between 2020 and 2030 in order to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. A report by the International Energy Agency found that coal was the "single largest source of global temperature increase" in 2018. The same report found that coal-fired electricity generation accounts for 30 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions.

The federal government has already committed to banning the export of thermal coal from Canada by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 - the minimum required for maintaining a livable planet. If Canada is to achieve its goals, we cannot continue to mine and burn thermal coal in Canada or abroad.

**Quotes:****Daniel Cheater, Ecojustice lawyer, said:**

"The Vista coal mine expansion's many harmful effects would include direct impacts on the protected critical habitat of one of Alberta's native trout species, the endangered Athabasca Rainbow Trout."

**Jesse Cardinal, Executive Director, Keepers of the Water, said:** "Coalspur must not be allowed to expand a major project like the Vista coal mine without a federal impact assessment. We need federal oversight to ensure the watersheds and all those who depend on the waters are going to be protected, and Treaty rights will not be breached."

"Canada took a worldwide leadership role in eliminating coal as a source of energy by co-founding the Powering Past Coal Alliance in 2017. Allowing the Vista coal expansion contradicts this goal."

**Art Jackson, President, West Athabasca Watershed Bioregional Society, said:**

"West Athabasca Watershed Bioregional Society is totally committed to supporting all actions needed to uphold the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's decision to send the proposed Vista coal mine expansion for a Federal Impact Assessment. Our Society has deep concerns with the ongoing and cumulative destructive impacts to our water, lands, air and wildlife habitat which must be addressed. All future generations will suffer the impacts from these destructive coal mining projects if allowed to proceed.

Canada has committed to combating climate change, and this means a strong No to any increased coal production domestically as well as stopping sales Internationally which just further add to the negative climate impacts happening all around the world."

**About:**

[Keepers of the Water](#) are First Nations, Métis, Inuit, environmental groups, concerned citizens, and communities working together for the protection of water, air, land, and all living things within the Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin. Keepers of the Water understand that clean, fresh water is invaluable to life and the environment for a sustainable, balanced, and just future for the survival of all of the life we share on this incredible planet.

[Ecojustice](#) uses the power of the law to defend nature, combat climate change and fight for a healthy environment. Its strategic, public interest lawsuits and advocacy lead to precedent-setting court decisions and law and policy that deliver lasting solutions to Canada's most urgent environmental problems. As Canada's largest environmental law charity, Ecojustice operates offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa and Halifax.

-30-

**Media Contacts:**

**Keepers of Water:** Jesse Cardinal, [ed@keepersofthewater.ca](mailto:ed@keepersofthewater.ca), 780-520-7108

**Ecojustice:** Shayoni Mehta, [smehta@ecojustice.ca](mailto:smehta@ecojustice.ca), 604-685-5618 ext. 259