

## Moving Beyond Coal, Part II

### An open letter from leaders of Faith-based groups in British Columbia

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September 24, 2014

To: The Honorable Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia

Cc: The Honorable Bill Bennett, Minister of Energy and Mines  
The Honorable Mary Polak, Minister of Environment  
The Honorable Dr. Terry Lake, Minister of Health  
The Honorable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Development  
The Honorable Todd Stone, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Thank you for reading our letter [Moving Beyond Coal - An open letter from leaders of Faith-based groups in British Columbia – sent May 12, 2014] and forwarding it your ministers. In that letter fifty-one clergy and faith-leaders from Sikh, Jewish, Unitarian, Quaker and many Christian denominations expressed deep concern about the morality of promoting local actions that will contribute to climate destabilization. The urgency of the climate crisis compels us to ask again that you consider how approving the new coal export infrastructure is compatible with a commitment to being part of the solution to the crisis. As Premier you have the greatest responsibility for economic and environmental leadership. We look to you for leadership on this issue.

We received a response to our letter from Bill Bennett, Minister of Energy and Mines. We respond to the main points of his letter below.

- We agree that the economy and the environment are interwoven, necessitating balanced actions that reflect deep, multi-faceted thinking. The letter from Minister Bennett did not provide an effective economic rationale for the Fraser Surrey Docks / Texada Island coal expansion project and did not show how this project will be climate neutral. Climate change is not just an environmental problem; it is also a human and economic problem that merits consideration with every new infrastructure initiative.
- The request to deny provincial permits for the Fraser Surrey Docks / Texada Island has no impact on the current 26,000 jobs that are generated by the BC mining industry. The request could only impact the creation of perhaps twenty five additional jobs related to transporting the additional US thermal coal, while loading numerous risks onto local communities and contributing to climate change. This project mainly benefits US coal companies who profit

from increased market access for an out-of-favor product in the US because of its connection to the production of undesirable climate-destabilizing Green House Gases (GHGs).

- Minister Bennett discussed the authority over the Fraser Surrey Docks / Texada Island, stating that it is under federal jurisdiction. However, the Province does have the power to award or deny permits for the Texada Island portion of the project. Without a permit to transship coal from Fraser Surrey Docks through Texada Island, the project cannot go ahead. Premier Clark, you can stop this project!
- None of the assessments of this coal export proposal have considered global climate impacts. If the proponents are eventually permitted to export 8 million tonnes of thermal coal annually, 17 million tonnes of GHGs will be released into the atmosphere every year. That is more than 25% of the total GHG's produced by the province of BC under current accounting (61.5 million tonnes GHGs).

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cas/mitigation/ghg\\_inventory/pdf/pir-2012-full-report.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cas/mitigation/ghg_inventory/pdf/pir-2012-full-report.pdf) -  
(*British Columbia Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report - 2012 p.11*).

While it is true that the coal combustion will largely take place in Asia, the warming effect will be global.

- As Premier, you have promoted LNG exports by claiming they will cut thermal coal use abroad. It is then illogical to promote a widely opposed project to export US thermal coal via BC.

As faith leaders we are concerned about all God's creation - the people and the natural world. Scriptures from our many faith traditions support this view. Premier Clark, as a person of faith yourself, you are guided to be "compassionate and thoughtful about others." We ask that you extend this compassion and "consideration of others" to all people globally who are now and will in the future be negatively affected by climate destabilization enhanced by the release of GHGs.

We ask that you show leadership to the world by:

1. Rescinding provincial permits allowing transshipment of US thermal coal from Fraser Surrey Docks through Texada island.
2. Pursuing a new course of action in renewable energy innovation as BC's export to the world and as BC's contribution to building a sustainable economy at home and abroad.

Respectfully submitted,

The Reverend Dorothy A. Jeffery, Minister, the United Church of Canada, Burnaby  
The Reverend Beth Hayward, Minister, Canadian Memorial United Church, Vancouver  
The Reverend Brenda Nestegaard Paul, Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church, Powell River

The Reverend Julianne Kasmer, Chaplain, Our Place Society, Victoria  
The Reverend Henri Lock, Chaplain, University of Victoria  
Christopher F. Bernard, MDiv, Pastoral Care Chaplain, Roman Catholic Health Care, Vancouver  
The Reverend Scott Swanson, Crescent United Church, Surrey  
The Reverend Scott Agur, Chair of Faithful Public Witness Cluster of Comox Nanaimo  
Presbytery  
The Reverend Tim Dutcher-Walls, Chaplain, New Vista Society, Burnaby  
The Reverend Campbell Connor, Comox United Church, Comox  
Fr. John Tritschler, Holy Rosary Cathedral, Vancouver  
The Reverend Stephan Wagner, Prince George  
The Reverend Maxine Pirie, Powell River United Church  
The Reverend Karen May, Texada Island United Church  
Ellen Pye, Clerk, Vancouver Religious Society of Friends (Quaker), Vancouver  
The Reverend H. Paul Schmidt, Retired Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Delta  
Rabbi David Mivasair, Ahavat Olam Synagogue, Vancouver  
The Reverend Dr. Gregory Mohr, Bishop, BC Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church, New  
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The Reverend Peggy Jensen, Sunnyside United Church, Surrey  
Gertrude A. Jocksch, Sisters of Charity, Richmond