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PRESS RELEASE

Saskatchewan Environmental Society

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For immediate release

The Saskatchewan Environmental Society and allies launch legal challenge over the Province's coal extension plan

The Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES), Citizens for Public Justice, and three citizens of Saskatchewan and Manitoba have launched a legal challenge against the Government of Saskatchewan. This follows the Province's June 18, 2025, announcement that it will keep conventional coal-fired power plants operating into the 2040s.

Representatives for SES are in Court of King's Bench in Saskatoon this morning, August 12, 2025, to begin proceedings. SES and their co-applicants are seeking a judicial review of the Saskatchewan government's decision, with the goal of enforcing the federally mandated shutdown of all conventional coal-fired power stations by December 31, 2029—a deadline that every other province is complying with.

This case is not against SaskPower. There is overwhelming evidence that shows SaskPower intended to comply with federal law and did not propose extending coal operations beyond 2029. Over two years of extensive public consultations, none of the electricity generation scenarios put forward by SaskPower included the continued operation of coal-fired power stations into the 2030s or 2040s. The controversial decision to defy federal law lies with Premier Scott Moe's government.

SES board member Peter Prebble states there is overwhelming evidence to support shutting down conventional coal-fired power stations: "Coal is the dirtiest form of energy production releasing harmful greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere along with other nasty pollutants such as mercury, sulphur dioxide, and particulate matter. These pollutants are a significant health hazard causing smog and acid rain and contaminating food sources such as fish. Children and older people are particularly vulnerable. Most worrisome of all, the emissions from coal burning are resulting in profound and dangerous changes to our climate."

The Saskatchewan government's decision to embrace coal has many dangerous implications. It undermines Canada's ability to meet its international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40 – 45% by 2030 and contradicts Canada's obligations under the Paris Agreement, a legally binding treaty to keep global average temperature rise well below 2°C. It also ignores repeated warnings from the United Nations, which has urged wealthy nations to completely phase out coal by 2030, while asking poorer countries to do so by 2040. As a wealthy jurisdiction by global standards, Saskatchewan's decision to extend coal use into the 2040s sets a dangerous precedent. If widely followed, the resulting greenhouse gas pollution would rapidly contribute to climate breakdown at a time when global co-operation is urgently needed.



Atmospheric pollution from Saskatchewan does not stop at the border. As the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized, such emissions are international in scope. By refusing to act responsibly to reduce them, the Government of Saskatchewan is turning a blind eye to the Court's own findings, which concluded: "Climate change is real. It is caused by greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activities, and it poses a grave threat to humanity's future."¹ SES board member Elaine Wheaton emphasizes that this threat includes, "more severe storms, unprecedented heatwaves, unprecedented droughts and wildfires, growing water scarcity, loss of coral reef ecosystems which house a quarter of all marine life, and a tragic erosion of humanity's ability to produce food."

SES argues that the provincial government's inaction seriously threatens Canadians' Charter rights to life, liberty, and security. SES President Margret Asmuss points to this year's wildfire crisis in northern Saskatchewan as one example of this threat, with thousands of people forced to evacuate their communities and millions of people being exposed to dangerous levels of wildfire smoke: "Climate change is contributing significantly to the wildfire emergency in western Canada, and unless deep and rapid greenhouse gas emissions reductions are achieved, climate change will create many other health and environmental crises in Canada in the future."

These concerns drive SES's legal challenge. SES Vice President Bob Halliday explains, "judicial reviews such as the one the Saskatchewan Environmental Society is asking for exist to ensure that decision makers exercise their authority in an appropriate manner. Judicial reviews provide a mechanism for reviewing the legality of government decisions with respect to all relevant legal and factual constraints, including legislation, international law, and constitutional rights and powers."

Environmental lawyer Glenn Wright, who is ably representing SES, affirms, "I am honoured to be acting as counsel for the applicants who are challenging this 'Coal Decision' and standing up for the rule of law in Canada. The climate crisis is urgent, and we need our institutions, including the judicial system, to respond."

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SES will be available to speak with the media both on-site at the courthouse following the hearing, and later in the afternoon both virtually and in-person in Saskatoon.

For more information, please contact:

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Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES) is a non-profit, registered charity that is committed to supporting sustainable living and sustainable resource use in Saskatchewan. We work with, and on behalf of, communities, organizations, businesses, and policy makers to encourage informed decision-making that moves us towards sustainability. SES's current action areas include sustainable energy and climate solutions, water protection, resource conservation, biodiversity preservation, and reduction of toxic substances. Our work in Saskatchewan is carried out in Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and our office is in Saskatoon on Treaty 6, the traditional territory of Cree Peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

¹ References re Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, 2021. <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/18781/index.do>