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PRESS RELEASE

Saskatchewan Environmental Society

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For immediate release

Saskatchewan's coal extension decision deserves full Court review

Tomorrow, September 15, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., the Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES) — along with co-appellants Kiké Dueck, Sherry Olson, Matthew Wiens, and the organization Citizens for Public Justice — will appear before the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal in Saskatoon to argue that our joint legal challenge of Saskatchewan's controversial coal extension decision should proceed to a full hearing.

The appeal concerns a June 18, 2025 directive from Minister Jeremy Harrison, sent via letter to SaskPower employees, to refurbish and extend the life of its conventional coal-fired power stations in defiance of the federally mandated phase-out date of December 31, 2029. SES and its co-appellants filed for judicial review a month later, arguing the directive is unlawful. The directive also relies on irrelevant and inaccurate economic analysis, ignores Canada's international climate commitments, and ignores more than a decade of SaskPower's public consultations and own transition planning. To make matters worse, the provincial government still has not provided the public with a clear, evidence-based justification for this decision.

In January 2026, the Court of King's Bench struck our case on procedural grounds, ruling that the coal extension decision is a high-level policy decision that does not belong in a courtroom. SES strongly disagrees with this characterization. SES maintains that retrofitting Saskatchewan's coal-fired power stations is an administrative decision that directly commands concrete action by SaskPower, exposes Saskatchewan residents to significant costs and pollution, and raises serious questions about whether governments can evade legal scrutiny for decisions with major environmental and financial consequences.

The September 15 hearing is not a debate on the full merits of the case. Instead, it focuses strictly on 'justiciability' — meaning whether Saskatchewan courts have the authority to review the province's coal extension decision at all.

"Saskatchewan people deserve a full and fair hearing on a decision that will affect our health, our climate, and our electricity bills for decades to come," says Margret Asmuss, SES Vice President. "The provincial government should not be able to make a decision with major legal, environmental, and financial consequences in the absence of full transparency to the public."



"The Courts have an essential role to play in conducting a judicial review in these unusual circumstances," says Peter Prebble, SES Board member. "Saskatchewan is preparing to spend billions of dollars extending the life of Saskatchewan's coal-fired power stations by another 20 years, even though conventional coal-fired electricity will be illegal in just over three years. Before Saskatchewan locks in two more decades of additional coal pollution, with its negative health and environmental impacts, the public deserves transparency, accountability, and a proper legal review."

Since our legal challenge was launched, the economic argument against extending coal has grown stronger. The government first referred to an estimated \$900 million refurbishment cost. SaskPower later disclosed in rate-review materials that refurbishment costs had risen to approximately \$2.6 billion.¹ Internal SaskPower documents subsequently made public suggest the full cost of refurbishing and operating the coal fleet could be far higher (in the order of \$11.4 billion), including billions more in maintenance and fuel costs through to 2050 — for a total cost of \$25.8 billion.²

Recent independent analyses support these findings. The Pembina Institute's August 2026 analysis found that extending coal to 2050 would cost between \$26 billion and \$32 billion.³ Similarly, Dr. Brett Dolter, an energy policy economist and Associate Professor at the University of Regina, has estimated that operating Saskatchewan's coal-fired power stations beyond 2029 would cost \$30.2 billion over the next 20 years.⁴

These costs would be borne by Saskatchewan households and businesses through higher electricity rates. SaskPower has already requested consecutive 3.9% rate increases for 2026 and 2027, but the Saskatchewan Rate Review Panel has now warned that the 2027 increase could be even higher — between 5.4% and 6.4% — as SaskPower faces significant financial and operational pressures. And internal SaskPower projections indicate that continuing to generate electricity from burning coal could double electricity rates by 2040.⁵ In contrast, independent analysis shows that cleaner alternatives could provide a more affordable path and save Saskatchewan residents up to \$800 per person annually.⁶

Coal-fired power is one of the clearest drivers of climate change, and wealthy jurisdictions around the world are being asked to phase out unabated coal by 2030. Saskatchewan should be no exception. The province already faces severe climate impacts — notably extreme heat, drought, wildfire smoke, flooding, and stress on water systems — and has among the highest per-capita greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Beyond climate risks, coal-fired power releases harmful air pollutants, including mercury, sulphur dioxide, and fine particulate pollution, which pose direct health risks to nearby communities. Extending coal-fired power beyond 2030 would add to climate pollution, prolong local air-quality and health risks, and tie Saskatchewan to an aging, costly technology when cleaner, more affordable electricity options are readily available.

¹ <https://saskratereview.ca/storage/612/01KSK3RVEVZ3SP86YXMYH7B43Q.pdf>

² <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/28100689/saskpower-coal-refurbishment-presentation-2025.pdf>

³ <https://www.pembina.org/pub/burning-questions>

⁴ <https://cdhowe.org/publication/the-high-cost-of-coal-fired-power-as-a-bridge-to-nuclear>

⁵ <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/28121378/saskpower-2026f-supply-plan.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.pembina.org/media-release/coal-will-cost-saskatchewan-tens-billions-more-natural-gas-or-renewables-report>



"The Prairies are warming rapidly, and Saskatchewan has a responsibility to be part of the global shift away from coal-fired power," says Elaine Wheaton, SES board member. "Extending coal would add to the pollution driving climate risks, while delaying the practical climate and economic solutions we should be scaling up now."

"Coal is not a responsible path forward for Saskatchewan. Rather, it is an expensive delay tactic," says Bob Halliday, SES board member. "The evidence points to a cleaner and more affordable path that prioritizes energy efficiency and conservation, wind and solar power, battery storage, stronger interprovincial transmission, and modern grid planning."

SES is asking the Court of Appeal to overturn the Court of King's Bench ruling and allow the judicial review to proceed so the legality and reasonableness of Saskatchewan's coal extension decision can be fully argued.

BACKGROUND

- On June 18, 2025, the Government of Saskatchewan announced its intention to extend the operation of conventional coal-fired electricity generation beyond the federal phase-out deadline.
- The Saskatchewan Environmental Society, Citizens for Public Justice, and three individual applicants filed an application for judicial review a month later, on July 18, 2025.
- On January 12, 2026, the Court of King's Bench struck the case on procedural grounds without considering its merits.
- The September 15, 2026 Court of Appeal hearing will take place at 10:00 a.m. at the Court of King's Bench in Saskatoon and will address whether the case can proceed to a full hearing.
- Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada that is defying federal law by extending operation of conventional coal-fired power stations beyond December 31, 2029. (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick — the only other two provinces still burning coal — have plans to phase out unabated coal by 2030.)
- Due to its heavy reliance on coal, Saskatchewan accounts for 24% of Canada's electricity-sector emissions, despite only having 3% of the country's population.⁷
- The Government of Saskatchewan has had notice since 2012, under the Harper government, that conventional coal-fired power would need to be phased out, and it has since had more than a decade to plan responsibly for affected workers and communities.
- Coal pollution could lead to an additional \$160 million to Saskatchewan's healthcare spending due to increases in respiratory illnesses and pollution-related fatalities for communities near the province's coal facilities.⁸

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⁷ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/2025NIR%20-%20Part%203.pdf> [Tables A13-1 and A13-9]

⁸ <https://www.pembina.org/pub/health-implications-saskatchewans-delayed-coal-power-phase-out>



The **Saskatchewan Environmental Society** 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, and 10.

Margret Asmuss (MCED, B.A. Hons) is the Saskatchewan Environmental Society's Vice President. She was the Sustainability Coordinator at the University of Saskatchewan's Office of Sustainability for 14 years and received the President's Service Award for that work in 2017. Before working for the University, she spent many years as the Energy Projects Coordinator for the Saskatchewan Environmental Society.

Bob Halliday (P.Eng.) is a board member with the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and practiced as a consulting engineer for more than 25 years. He previously worked for Environment Canada and is a former director of Canada's National Hydrology Research Centre. Bob's projects concerned interjurisdictional water management and the effects of climate change on water resources.

Peter Prebble (MSEM, M.Ed., BBA) is a board member with the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and its former Policy Director. He has authored several publications on climate change and renewable energy potential in Saskatchewan. He also served as a Member of the Saskatchewan Legislature for 16 years, including service in the provincial cabinet and as Legislative Secretary to the Premier for Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation.

Elaine Wheaton (M.Sc., B.Sc. High Hons) is a board member with the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and is a climate scientist and adjunct professor at the University of Saskatchewan. She previously worked at the Saskatchewan Research Council. She is an award-winning author and was also awarded a Nobel Peace Prize certificate in 2007 for substantial contributions to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.