

WORKING TO DEFEAT



ON-RESERVE POVERTY

May 14, 2020

Dale Swampy  
President, National Coalition of Chiefs  
<contact information removed>

Joint Review Panel  
Grassy Mountain Coal Project  
160 Elgin Street, 22nd Floor  
Ottawa ON K1A 0H3

Sent Electronically to:  
IAAC.GrassyMountain.AEIC@canada.ca

Attention: Mr. Alex Bolton  
Panel Chair

Dear Sir:

RE: Grassy Mountain Coal Project  
IAAC Reference Number 80101

I am writing to share with you the urgent need for support of the First Nations communities, businesses and workers involved in Canada's energy and natural resources industry. We have been following the Grassy Mountain Project through the involvement of a number of Treaty Seven First Nations and understand that the Project is shovel-ready and in the late stages of the regulatory process. We further understand that all of the Treaty Seven First Nations have signed letters of support for the Project and are looking forward to the economic activity that this Project could bring to their citizens.

As you are no doubt aware, the combination of a fall in oil and other commodity prices, alongside the fall in demand from the COVID-19 situation, has caused an unprecedented crisis in the Canadian energy and natural resources industries. While, sadly, many Canadians will be dismissive of the needs of these industries and their hundreds of thousands of workers at this time, many First Nations are facing an economic disaster if these industries are slow to recover.

There are 39 First Nations that produce oil and/or natural gas on reserve, and over a hundred that rely on economic benefits from pipelines passing through their territories. In addition, there are over 12,000

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self identified Indigenous employees in the energy industry, and hundreds of Indigenous owned businesses who provide goods and services worth billions of dollars every year.

All of this is now at risk. I know it is the mandate of our Government to ensure more Indigenous people enter the middle class, and that more First Nations achieve self-determination, including by building revenue-generating capacity. It is the position, and the experience, of the National Coalition of Chiefs that this will not be possible without strong First Nations' participation in a strong energy and natural resource industries.

As such, I am writing to ask that you consider that it is the Canadian public interest that the energy and natural resource industries recover as quickly as possible, to ensure that the many Indigenous communities, workers and businesses that rely on these industries can recover and thrive as well. I do not need to tell you that poverty, hopelessness, and dependence are a major source of the social ills and health gaps that plague our communities, and that the COVID-19 crisis will hit First Nations the hardest, if there is no strategic intervention.

Specifically, with respect to the Grassy Mountain Project, we request that the JRP proceed to ensure that the regulatory process proceeds expeditiously so that the economic benefits can begin as soon as possible next year. To that end, we request that:

- The JRP schedule a process leading to a hearing as soon as possible;
- The JRP consider alternate hearing procedures if necessary, to ensure safety and health of participants during the Covid-19 crisis; and
- The JRP issue its report as soon as possible after the hearing to allow Government to proceed smoothly to the next step of the regulatory process.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Dale Swampy  
President National Coalition of Chiefs

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