



Alberta Wilderness Association  
"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

October 22, 2025

Hon. Rebecca Schulz  
Minister of Environment and Protected Areas  
Government of Alberta  
Email: [epa.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:epa.minister@gov.ab.ca)

Hon. Brian Jean  
Minister of Energy and Minerals  
Government of Alberta  
Email: [minister.energy@gov.ab.ca](mailto:minister.energy@gov.ab.ca)

Dear Ministers,

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) wants to commend the quality of research coming out of the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas as of late, related to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. Having current scientific data and robust analysis available is critical to strong, evidence-based decision-making; we welcome seeing the latest research reflected in this government's policies.

However, **we are disappointed to hear that our request to have one of your government scientists present their research has been denied.**

During the winter months, AWA regularly hosts Talk Nights, where local experts and researchers present their work to our members and the public. In the past we've had presentations on the effects of urbanization on bumblebees, applications of prescribed fires on working landscapes, wolverine ecology and populations, and more – the type and content of the talks vary, but the ultimate goal is to increase awareness about conservation science, goals, tools, and threats in Alberta.

We were eager to hear Dr. Colin Cooke, a senior aquatic scientist with EPA, present on his latest papers, detailing the past, current, and predicted impacts of coal on Alberta's environment. Dr. Cooke confirmed he was available and willing, but his request for permission from senior staff was promptly rejected.

As you know, this topic is of great interest to Albertans.

In their extensive public engagement, the Coal Policy Committee observed that the government should "place priority on restoring trust throughout Alberta's regulatory system for coal, including material new efforts to convince Albertans that the public interest is respected". This, among other recommendations and observations, were accepted by the Alberta Government on March 4, 2022.

One such way this could be realized would be ensuring that the leading government scientists in the field have meaningful opportunities to interact with the public and present their publicly funded research. This is consistent with the government's "[Transparency Alberta](#)" strategy, which states,

"Public information belongs to the public. When governments share data, decisions and spending openly, they build trust, strengthen democracy and uphold accountability."

While Dr. Cooke's research papers are publicly available, the scientific methodologies and terminology used may be difficult for the general public to understand. Presentations and interviews are the most common mediums used by researchers and scientific communicators to translate their work and findings into knowledge widely accessible to the public, while also giving those interested the opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

Considering the government's commitment to accountability and transparency, it is critical that communication between civil servants and the Alberta public is freely accessible and unimpeded. AWA strongly advises against any limitations on government staffs' ability to speak with the public and press, at the risk of the Alberta government appearing authoritarian. The muzzling of academics, researchers, and scientists has historically been a key tactic of such regimes to censor knowledge, silence discourse, and restrict freedoms.

AWA requests the government reverse this decision, and permit Dr. Colin Cooke (and any of his peers similarly restricted) free leave to speak to the public and press about their work.

Sincerely,

Alberta Wilderness Association



Kennedy Halvorson  
Conservation Specialist

**Cc'd:**

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