The Honorable Jonathan Wilkinson

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I would like to state my opposition to the Benga Mining Company’s Grassy Mountain Project.

The results of open pit coal mining are clear: production of toxic selenium, arsenic and other contaminants, the loss of critical habitat for wildlife, mutations in fish, failures of trout populations, polluted water supplies to wells and ranches, and ongoing concerns with seepage and unstable tailings ponds. Large amounts of water would need to be diverted from our rivers which southern Alberta can ill afford. This water would then be contaminated with toxins.

Promises of environmental protection and mitigation of selenium toxins in water are not credible when one looks at how current coal mines are performing in Alberta and British Columbia.

In the Elk Valley, both the Elk and Fording Rivers are contaminated with selenium.  Some ranchers are trucking in water for their cattle.  Wells have been closed in. Cut throat trout populations have declined 93% and mutations are presenting. The U.S. government has sent a formal complaint to Canada and to B.C. about selenium contamination in the Elk River as it crosses the border into the United States.

BC has set safe levels of selenium in drinking water at 10 parts per billion. However, measurements throughout Elk Valley below the mines have found selenium levels at 50-70 ppb and in many cases higher than 100 ppb.

Any jobs and tax revenue generated by the Grassy Mountain mine will be short term and only a small part of Alberta’s economy. Financial benefits for the local area will be limited and last only for the life of the mine. Most of the money will go elsewhere, the bulk to the Australian owners.

Open pit coal mining is a dirty process, and is becoming obsolete as greener electric arc furnaces replace coal blast furnaces in steel production. I believe that, in 2021, taking care of our air, water, wildlife and vegetation is no longer optional and *must* be considered an absolute priority.

A Public Consultation Plan for our Eastern Slopes is essential and a Stop Work Order on all proposed coal developments, including all existing leases, must be put in place until public consultation and land use planning is completed including a science based review of the 1976 coal policy.