

Doctors, nurses raise false alarm about dangers of coal

Health groups misinforming the public on a matter that will directly damage their health

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CALGARY, Alta./ November 16, 2015/ Troy Media/ – In Canada, physicians are required to obtain informed consent before conducting any procedure. "The patient must have been given an adequate explanation about the nature of the proposed investigation or treatment and its anticipated outcome as well as the significant risks involved and alternatives available."

Thus it is appalling that the Alberta Medical Association, the United Nurses of Alberta and numerous other health agencies have jumped on the phase-out coal bandwagon in the advocacy ad which appeared recently in the *Edmonton Journal*, without a wit of proper information for the 'patient' - the consumer, taxpayer and medical recipient.

First of all, the ad falsely raises public alarm. There is no citation given for the claim that "Research shows that coal contributes to the deaths of 100 people a year and over 4,000 asthma episodes in the province each year."

If this refers to the Pembina Institute's report "[A Costly Diagnosis](#): Subsidizing coal power with Albertans' health", this is not a research report based on patient records. It is based on a computer simulation model - one that Dr. Ross McKittrick tested and found reported more people died of air pollution than died in total!

If one says coal 'contributes', then what is the proportional contribution of wildfires, which put out a thousand times the fine particulates, mercury, and carcinogenic Polycyclic Aromatic Carbons? What of cars, trucks, trains and planes, which Environment Canada says are responsible for some 23 per cent of GHG emissions in Canada? What of residential fireplaces - double the emissions of fine particulates of coal? Why no call to ban flying, driving, or using your fireplace?

Coal-fired power plants put out only 0.4 per cent of fine particulate matter in Alberta in 2011 and are largely *not* responsible for anyone's death, and are far more likely to have aided in the saving of thousands of lives because hospitals need affordable power.

The ad's 'health' case appears as a proxy for renewables activists to promote their wares, in similar fashion to what was done in Ontario. This would violate the Canadian Medical Association's Code of Ethics in numerous ways.

Ontario today faces the highest industrial power price in North America, thanks to the phase out of coal and the addition of renewables like wind and solar. This has already

tripled power prices in the EU and UK, pushing citizens into heat-or-eat poverty - which has magnified all forms of illnesses and multiplied deaths. Because, you see, *cold* kills. In the UK in 2012-2013, some 31,000 people died prematurely due to fuel poverty health complications.

Pensioners and the vulnerable are also forced into choosing between buying food or paying power bills. There is also an increase in asthma and respiratory conditions.

Another outcome? Job loss. In Alberta, some 75 per cent of our power is used by industry. Triple those power prices and many business operators will shut down or leave.

These expert health groups are commenting far outside their area of expertise and misinforming the public on a matter that will directly damage our health care system and our health.

Alberta already pays about 45 per cent of its budget for health services. This 'treatment' will damage public and individual health and finances. The advocacy ad is attempting to scare you into consent, not inform you.

Medical experts typically do not comment outside their area of competency. Good advice. Too bad these folks didn't follow it.

Michelle Stirling is Communications Manager for Friends of Science Society and co-author of their evidence based report rebutting the coal phase-out campaign "Burning Questions."