

Supporting Workers and Communities

Recommendations to the Government of Alberta
Advisory Panel on Coal Communities



GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cooperate and coordinate with other governments on policy development to address the issues and impacts of climate policies on the economy, the labour market and communities.
2. Immediately enter into discussions with the Government of Canada to address that government's role in the transition process.
3. Take a coordinated approach across ministries in implementing our Panel's recommendations.
4. Programs and funding should continue to be tailored and targeted to support workers and communities so they remain relevant to stakeholders and First Nations.
5. All programs and funding for addressing transition needs should include measurable objectives, performance targets and means of evaluating their success.
6. Develop and implement a clear and effective strategy for communicating with impacted stakeholders and First Nations, to let them know what is being done to address their transition needs and how to access information and support.
9. The industry-wide strategy should include the establishment of Worker Transition Teams for each affected region to provide a rapid response to the transition needs of individual workers, assessments of workers' needs, and communication with workers to address those needs.
10. Each Worker Transition Team should develop and coordinate the implementation of a plan to provide worker transition services.
11. Create an expeditious process for workers to obtain appropriate certification and/or recognition of their skills and prior learning, and identify what specific training or practical experience they can obtain to become certified and/or recognized.
12. Ensure workers who are not retiring have access to the education, post-secondary education and retraining necessary for achieving re-employment. This should include access to a full range of programs for workers who need skills development to retain employment or to move to re-employment.
13. Programs and training should be delivered, as much as possible, while workers are currently employed and should include accessible and flexible skills development models. This includes a role for employers to enable access to skills development during employment.

SUPPORTING WORKERS

Training and Employment Transition Services

7. Immediately undertake an analysis of relevant provincial and federal programs to identify those that can support impacted workers and identify program/service gaps that need to be addressed.
8. Help impacted companies, unions and communities collaborate in an industry-wide approach to identifying needs and planning, developing and implementing a strategy for worker transition. This strategy should allow for flexibility to recognize the unique circumstances of impacted workers' needs at each coal-fired facility and coal mine.
14. Impacted workers who are not retiring should have access to financial support to undertake the skills development needed for them to successfully achieve re-employment.
15. Employers and unions should play roles in facilitating the training or retraining of impacted workers. This could be reflected in employer cost sharing with government and union participation in planning and delivery of assistance.
16. Build or adapt an online job-matching tool to connect impacted workers with employers who are seeking the skills and experience that they possess.

17. Facilitate and encourage preferential hiring of impacted workers for jobs created by the transition (and which may include some retraining of workers).
18. Offer relocation assistance that will meaningfully offset the costs incurred by impacted workers who are prepared to relocate to take up new employment opportunities.

Income Security

19. Where provisions are inadequate, facilitate the negotiation of severance provisions between employers and unions that represent workers at coal-fired facilities and associated coal mines. Similar negotiations should be facilitated for non-union employees.
20. Where provisions are inadequate, facilitate the negotiation of early retirement benefits between employers and unions that represent workers at coal-fired facilities and associated coal mines. Similar negotiations should be facilitated for non-union employees.
21. Immediately assess the direct impact of the transition on the funded status, solvency and operation of defined-benefit pension plans and take steps to ensure these plans are adequately funded.
22. Encourage the Government of Canada to examine the use of Employment Insurance as a means of mitigating some of the challenges faced by impacted workers.

Research and Policy

23. Work with electricity generation companies, relevant unions and others to develop a profile of impacted worker qualifications compared with high-demand employment opportunity occupations in each impacted region.

24. As soon as possible, complete regional labour market studies on the supply and demand for occupations and skills in each impacted community, identifying any gaps that need to be filled. Look at current and projected employment opportunities and update studies periodically.
25. As soon as possible, complete a study of effective practices in worker and community transition. Make the findings available to stakeholders and to the Worker Transition Teams to inform the implementation of transition activities.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

26. Once a community identifies that the transition is affecting critical services, help provide stability on a temporary basis to impacted remote communities while the communities identify and assess new opportunities.
27. Immediately create a new coal communities economic transition program or adapt/repurpose an existing program to work collaboratively with municipal, economic development and business stakeholders in impacted communities to assist in the transition.
28. As part of the coal communities economic transition program, immediately establish in each impacted region an economic development “concierge” so that impacted communities have one point of contact with government.
29. The concierge should work with impacted communities to assist in evaluating and promoting business attraction initiatives that have a reasonable probability of success and are reasonably cost effective.
30. Give priority to infrastructure projects in impacted regions, and use the spending power of government to leverage economic development in impacted communities.

SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS

31. Have a follow-up meeting with Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation to hear its perspective on the transition.
32. Complete an analysis on the potential reduction/elimination of the Benefit Agreement and other possible impacts, in conjunction with the Paul First Nation, TransAlta and the Government of Canada.
33. Expedite funding for and completion of data collection to develop a profile and assessment of the labour force capacity of Paul First Nation members (on and off reserve) and regional labour market opportunities.
34. Based on the aforementioned profile, support the development and implementation of a Paul First Nation Training and Employment Strategy, in conjunction with the Government of Canada, to prepare Paul First Nation members for jobs and careers in and around the community (i.e., industries and employers in the region with high-demand occupancy).
35. Assist the Paul First Nation in accessing funding for a training project tied to reclaimed land and renewable energy projects in Paul First Nation territory and to other reclamation and renewable energy jobs in the region.