



A better future for all: Social solutions

THE HARD ROAD

LEDUC COUNTY, ALBERTA, NAVIGATES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

When the Government of Canada launched a Just Transition Taskforce to ask for recommendations on how to support coal workers and communities, few had more to lose than Rick Smith, Councillor of Leduc County.

Home to a coal mine and a generating station that had been key contributors to the tax base since 1988, Leduc County, Alberta, feared the coal phase-out would affect its ability to deliver municipal services and possibly lead to community erosion. Beyond the 450 coal workers whose jobs were at risk, firefighters, teachers and municipal workers could all be affected.

Working with federal and provincial governments, Leduc County secured funding to help diminish the impacts of the coal phase-out, estimated at approximately C\$20 million annually. The funding includes C\$17.7 million from the federal government to complete the Nisku Spine Road which, when fully constructed in 2023, will increase the accessibility of high-volume transport between key areas creating 950 local jobs and attracting up to 60 businesses.

The process of economic diversification in Leduc County was not easy. The local community was sceptical about the benefits of phasing out coal. Councillor Rick Smith, however, saw promise where most saw challenges. Selected as the municipal representative on Canada's Just Transition Task Force and inspired by Ontario's coal phase-out success, Rick embraced the transition from coal.

Gradually, Leduc County residents and people from surrounding communities started to see the benefits of the transition. The county's economic diversification into logistics and value-added agriculture has resulted in thousands of jobs, keeping workers in the community and offsetting the tax base loss. Emissions were cut by 50% as a result of the power plant being retrofitted to natural gas.

Leduc County's experience shows that building credibility, delivering on promises, and measuring outcomes such as number of programmes established, jobs created, and metric tonnes of greenhouse gases removed, are essential components of a successful transition.

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