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# EXPERIENCE FOSSIL FUELS



ENERGY  
EDUCATION  
TOOL KIT

BY INSIDE EDUCATION



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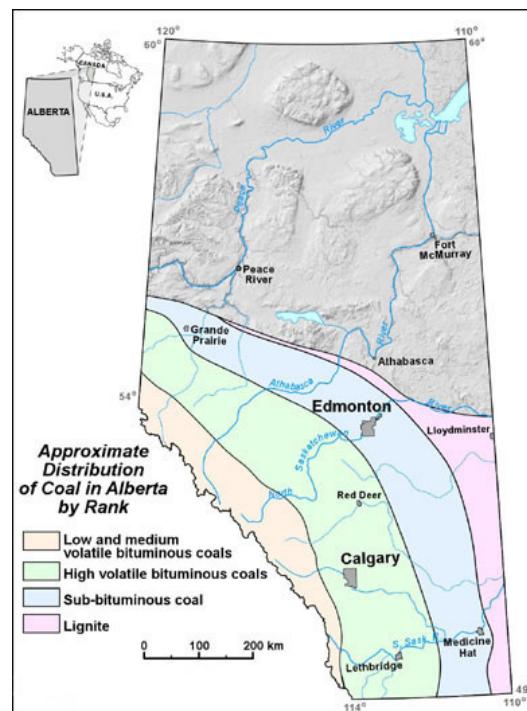
## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are fossil fuels?
- Where are fossil fuels found in Alberta?
- How do we extract energy from fossil fuels?
- What is being done to lessen the impact of the fossil fuel industries on water, wildlife and air?

Fossil fuels are formed from the buried, fossilized remains of plants and animals that lived millions of years ago. The fossil fuels found in Alberta are **coal**, **oil** and **natural gas**. Albertans have relied on fossil fuels for many decades. Fossil fuels are found nearly everywhere in Alberta and we have industries to find, extract and process these resources; fossil fuels are a big part of the Alberta economy. The extraction, processing and use of these resources releases greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change and has impacts on water, air, and wildlife.

## COAL

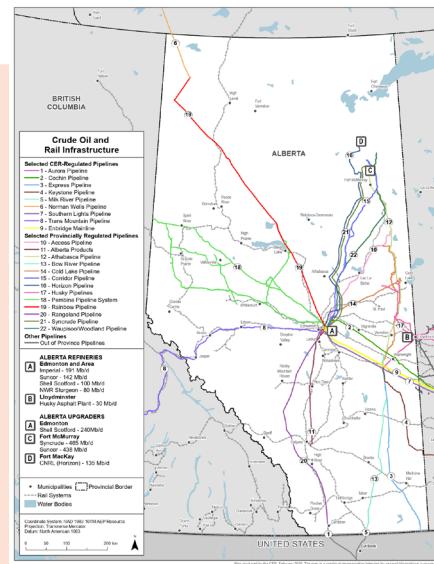
Coal-bearing formations underlie nearly half of Alberta, and as of September 2025 Alberta had 5 active coal mines<sup>4</sup>. In 2024, 93% of Alberta's mined coal was **thermal coal**, which is used for electricity generation. The remaining 7% was **metallurgical coal**, which is used to produce materials such as steel.<sup>3</sup> Most coal is extracted using surface mining, which includes strip mining (*reclamation can be carried out throughout the mining process*) and open pit mining (*once the pit has been mined, it is backfilled and resurfaced*). In 2018, the government of Canada announced it would phase out coal-fired electricity by 2030 because the burning of coal releases greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.



Alberta coal distributions (Credit: Alberta Energy Regulator/Alberta Geological Survey)

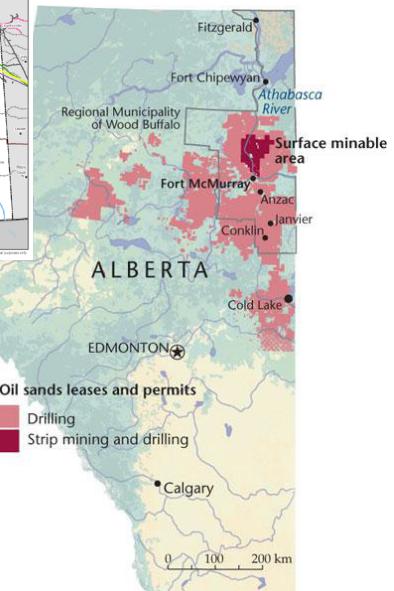
## OIL

Canada is the 4th largest oil producer in the world<sup>12</sup> and is home to some of the largest oil reserves. In 2023, Western Canada accounted for 96% of the country's total crude oil production<sup>5</sup>, most of which is exported to other countries. Crude oil can be made into petroleum products such as gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and plastics. Crude oil is transported through Canada using pipelines and rail, and to overseas markets using tankers.



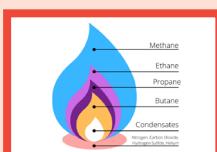
Alberta's Crude Oil and Rail Infrastructure (credit: Canada Energy Regulator)

Alberta's Oil Sands (credit: Steven Fick/Canadian Geographic)

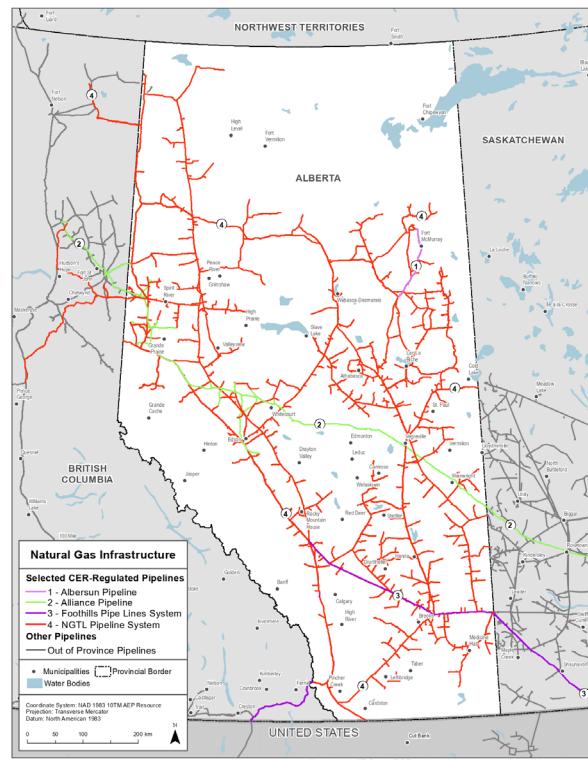


## NATURAL GAS

Alberta and B.C. produced 98% of Canada's natural gas in 2023.<sup>5</sup> Once the natural gas is extracted and processed in Western Canada, pipelines carry it to markets in central/eastern Canada and the United States. Natural gas can be used for heating and transportation, and made into products such as propane (for cooking), electricity, fertilizers, and more.



Alberta's natural gas pipelines. The NGTL Pipeline System in Alberta gathers and carries natural gas from the Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin to domestic and export markets. It is 24,568km in length. (credit: Canada Energy Regulator)



## MATERIALS FROM KIT

- Issues & Innovations Matching Cards

## TRY THESE ACTIVITIES

- Answer the following questions using the oil, natural gas and coal descriptions found on the previous page :

1. Canada is the \_\_\_\_\_ largest oil producer in the world.
2. What are 4 products that crude oil can be turned into?
3. What are the 2 main ways oil is extracted from Alberta's oilsands?  
*(hint: look at the legend on the Alberta Oilsands Map)*
4. How is natural gas typically transported?
5. What are 3 uses of natural gas?
6. What is the most extensive network of natural gas pipelines in Alberta called?  
*(hint: look at the red lines on the Natural Gas Infrastructure Map)*
7. What type of coal is used for steel making?
8. Why is Canada phasing out coal for electricity generation?
9. Is most of Alberta's coal located in the northern or southern half of the province?

- Complete the Issues & Innovations matching cards - match the issue to the innovation and learn more about what's being done to lessen the impact of the fossil fuels industry on water, wildlife and air.
- RESEARCH: How are deposits of fossil fuel resources found in the first place? What technologies help with locating and extracting fossil fuels?

## CONSIDER ...

In general, the world is transitioning away from fossil fuels and toward more renewable and alternative energy sources. What are some of the opportunities and challenges of using fossil fuels?

## CONNECT ...

Fossil fuels generate most of our electricity, fuel most of our cars, and produce many of the items we use on a daily basis. Think of 5 ways you've used fossil fuels in the last 24 hours.

## LEARN MORE ...

Check out Inside Education's Oil Sands Field Trip Videos to learn more about how we produce fossil fuels in Alberta.

> <https://www.insideeducation.ca/learning-resources/oil-sands-field-trip-8>