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The Reality of Coal Jobs, Canadian Edition

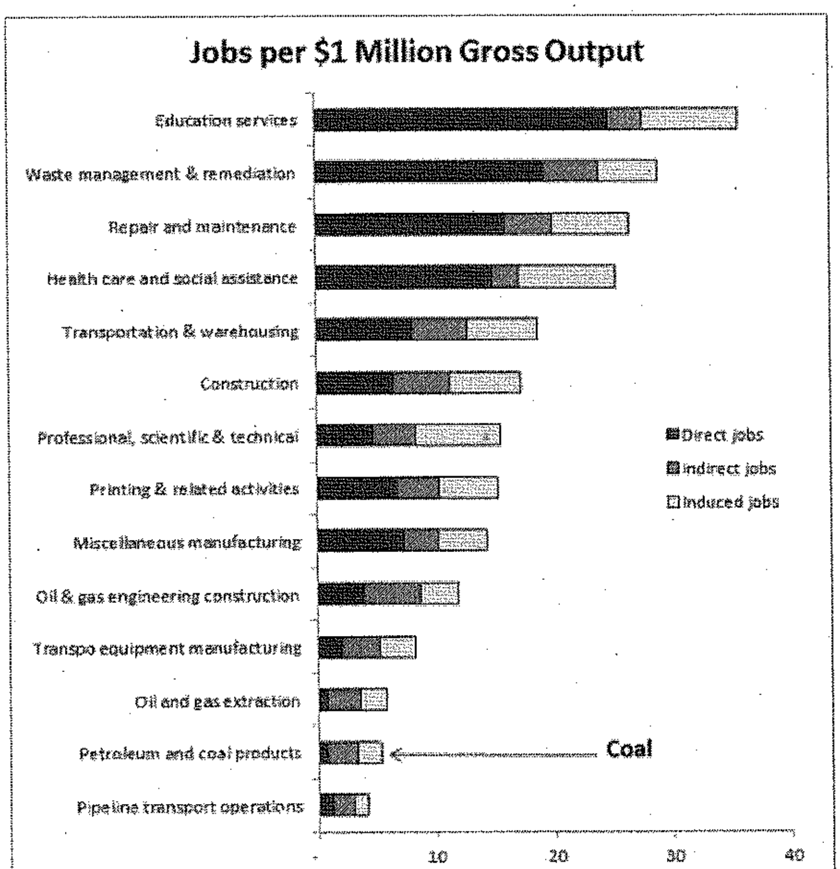
Fossil fuel spending produces little employment.

Eric de Place on March 28, 2013 at 10:01 am

This post is part of the research project: Northwest Coal Exports

While reading up on Enbridge's proposed Northern Gateway Pipeline, I came across a table so compelling that I had to share the results. As I've pointed out before, coal sector investments are a lousy way to create jobs. It's true in the US, and particularly in the West.

Not surprisingly, it's true in Canada too. The redoubtable Marc Lee at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives demonstrated as much with a nifty input-output analysis that allowed him to calculate the employment impacts of investments across a range of economic sectors. Just as we've seen in the US, coal is about the worst you can do.



Marc's numbers clearly show that from an employment standpoint, coal is a very poorly leveraged place to encourage additional investment. In fact, this is a feature of fossil fuel sector investments more generally: on a dollar-for-dollar basis they produce very few jobs.

Notes: I monkeyed around with Marc's table a bit to produce this chart, which I think tells a clearer story than rows of numbers, but I left the underlying data completely intact. Data geeks, however, will want to read Marc's technical notes on page 18 of the full report.

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