



Canada Must Call for the Permanent Closure of the Escobal Mine

30 Canadian civil society organizations denounce Canada's disrespectful and disingenuous call for more "dialogue" after the Xinka People unequivocally rejected the Escobal mine in a court-ordered consultation

Source: MiningWatch Canada, Americas Policy Group, Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability, Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network

OTTAWA, September 16, 2026 — Thirty Canadian civil society organizations are [calling on the Canadian government](#) to respect the Xinka People's historic decision to withhold consent for the Escobal silver mine in Guatemala and stop undermining their rights through calls for continued dialogue.

In the culmination of a landmark consultation ordered by Guatemala's Constitutional Court, the **Xinka People have [denied consent](#)** for operations at the Escobal mine, owned by the Canadian company Pan American Silver. The Court ordered the consultation in 2018 after finding that the Xinka's Indigenous rights had been violated when the mine began operating in their territory without their consent. According to the court sentence and the international law it cites, **the consultation outcome must be respected and the mine safely and permanently closed.**

Pan American Silver has so far failed to publicly acknowledge the consultation results, despite the Xinka People's public announcement and a [petition with over 6,000 signatures](#) hand-delivered to its Vancouver office last November. Canada has also repeatedly refused to acknowledge the outcome, most recently in its June 17 [response to a parliamentary petition](#). The petition called on Canada to respect Xinka People's rights to free, prior, and informed consent and take measures to protect Xinka human right defenders threatened for opposing a Canadian-owned mine.

The government's response promotes "responsible business conduct" instead of concrete measures to uphold Canada's international human rights obligations, calling for "dialogue towards a mutually beneficial outcome" rather than acknowledging and respecting the Xinka People's decision to withhold consent. The response entirely fails to mention Canada's *Voices at Risk* guidelines for protecting human rights defenders. Nor does it recognize how the Canadian embassy in Guatemala's promotion of Canadian mining projects through Canada's Trade Commissioner Services may increase the risk defenders face.

Further, just days before the Canadian government tabled its response to the petition, [Canada announced](#) it was eliminating Canada's corporate accountability watchdog – the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise.

Canadian organizations are [calling on Canada](#) to stop putting Canadian mining interests ahead of Indigenous rights, respect the Xinka People's decision to say "No!" and help ensure the safe and permanent closure of the Escobal mine.

QUOTES:

- "On May 8, 2025, the Xinka People delivered the results of the consultation directly to Guatemala's Ministry of Energy and Mines and the President. The result was clear: we denied Pan American Silver consent to continue operating the Escobal mine. Our decision is not an invitation to negotiate. It is the outcome of a historic consultation, and it must be respected."
– **Marisol Guerra, Xinka representative and elected member of the consultation**
- "As Xinka People, the serious risks we have faced over these years will only increase if our decision is not respected and the mine is not permanently closed. For over ten years, our people have been persecuted, subjected to violence, and to military states of siege in order to bring the Escobal mine into operation. And even as the mine has remained suspended throughout the consultation process, threats and attacks have continued. Attempting to reopen the mine against our will would only put our people, our water, and our rights at even greater risk." – **Marta Muñoz, Xinka representative and elected member of the consultation**
- "Canada cannot claim to respect Indigenous rights while dismissing a clear decision reached through such a comprehensive consultation. By calling for a 'mutually beneficial' outcome, Canada is once again putting the interests of a Canadian mining company ahead of Indigenous rights. What message does that send to mining-affected communities everywhere fighting for their right to say no?" – **Arturo Ezquerro-Cañete, Interim Latin America Program Coordinator, MiningWatch Canada**
- "Xinka representatives have repeatedly sought help from the Canadian embassy in reigning in a Canadian company, yet their calls have gone unanswered. Canada's response to Parliament fails to even mention its own *Voices at Risk* guidelines or its responsibility to protect defenders facing threats linked to Canadian companies. Canada promotes Canadian mining interests while failing to protect the people put at risk by those same projects. *Voices at Risk* must be strengthened, implemented, and backed by clear obligations for Canadian officials to act." – **Javier López, Guatemala Coordinator, Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network**
- "Xinka human rights defenders have shown extraordinary courage to insist on their rights to a meaningful consultation on the Escobal mine and their people's decision to reject the project because of its harmful impacts. Canada must not stand by while defenders who have

said 'no' to a Canadian mining company continue to face threats and attacks. It's long past time to take the actions that the defenders have said will help to protect them." – **Kathy Price, National Network Coordinator, Americas Policy Group**

- "Canada's claims to champion 'responsible business conduct' ring hollow so long as Canada has no effective mechanisms capable of holding Canadian companies accountable for human rights violations and environmental harm. Escobal exposes a harsh reality: when Indigenous rights stand in the way of Canadian mining interests, Canada chooses the company over accountability." – **Aidan Gilchrist-Blackwood, Coordinator, Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability**

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