



Kamloops Physicians for a Healthy Environment

Our Mission: Kamloops Physicians for a Healthy Environment is dedicated to protecting the health and well-being of the citizens of Kamloops by promoting health education and science-based interventions that result in maintaining and improving the environment.

May 9, 2013

LETTER TO THE KAMLOOPS COMMUNITY:

Kamloops Physicians for a Healthy Environment (KPHE) appreciated the opportunity at the recent all candidates forum to ask a challenging question: “Do you support a truly independent, truly comprehensive Health Impact Assessment? – yes? or no?” Our Physicians’ group has grave concerns about the potential health impacts of the proposed Ajax mine on our community. This is why we are standing up and volunteering our time to get answers to the questions posed by friends and neighbours in prior public forums.

The forum allowed little set up to the question, and the microphone for the questioner went dead the moment the question was asked, so there was no alternative but to stand and let Terry Lake and Ed Klop turn the question side-ways with illogical comparisons between the whole medical profession and the drug industry. Those who had familiarity with the criticisms of the BC Environmental Assessment process were not so quick to dismiss the question. All candidates had received written and emailed letters introducing our group and our concerns. One candidate chose to meet with us to hear the fact-based presentation of the research in this area. Others have indicated a desire to learn more.

What is important is that people now know that there is a substantial group of physicians interested in the health impacts on the citizens of Kamloops who would be downwind of the proposed mine. The mine will affect the health of all people in Kamloops and surrounding valleys, not just those living in Aberdeen, as particulates travel far from their origin. The mine would double diesel fumes in the city, bring more dust particles with all their negative impacts on health, increase heavy metals in the air, and have serious long-term impacts on water and soil. The medical evidence of negative health impacts from this type of pollution is compelling - there are no safe levels. Heavy metals do not degrade and continue to exist in the environment long term. There are increases in deaths, strokes, heart attacks, lung diseases, brain cell changes, and multiple types of cancer and pregnancy complications.

Physician advocates made the public aware of the negative health effects of burning creosote-soaked railway ties in Kamloops. Physicians and Kamloops advocates, along with increased awareness from the Walkerton tragedy, catapulted our community to be the site of a world-renowned water purification plant. Part of being a physician is to voice questions and concerns when public health is an issue.

Our group is not political – we do not support one candidate over another. During the debate we simply asked if they would support a better review process to include the highest accepted standard in Health Impact Assessment. Medical Officers of Health for our Province have suggested this. Constructing a large open pit mine within city limits of a well-established and large community is almost unprecedented in North America. The people of Kamloops deserve nothing less than the most rigorous health impact assessment available.

Please take some time to view the presentation “When Mining and Urban Populations Collide” on youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WcdtQjF1E>

Thank you,
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