

MiningWatch Canada / Mines Alerte

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Newsletter

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Important notice! Logo contest!

MiningWatch Canada needs a logo for our letterhead and web site. There is even a \$100 prize for the winning entry. Entries should be sent to the MiningWatch Canada office in Ottawa; judging will be done by the Board of Directors at their March 5 meeting.

Royal Oak set to seek Toronto Stock Exchange relisting
– Financial Post, February 14, 2000



(Peggy Witte impression by C. Kneen)

Mining's Toxic Orphans – Abandoned Mines Represent Over \$1 Billion Federal Liability

On January 11th, MiningWatch Canada presented a plan for dealing with Canada's abandoned mines crisis to the eight members of cabinet most responsible for finding solutions to this issue. The plan calls for:

- A national inventory of sites for which the federal government carries responsibility, and incentives for the provinces to create compatible databases on sites under their jurisdiction
- Physical and chemical assessments of all abandoned mines to verify hazards
- Provision for resources to clean up the worst sites first with a plan to establish the priorities and more research dollars to figure out how to do this best
- Establishment of a funding mechanism to recover costs from industry to pay for cleaning up the sites

Clean-up of the sites *under federal jurisdiction alone* will cost much more than \$1 billion. Abandoned or orphaned mines – closed mines for which the owner cannot be

found, or for which the owner is unwilling or financially unable to carry out cleanup – are a key source of pollution in Canada. There are at least 10,000 of these “toxic orphans” leaching various acidic mixtures of cyanide, lead, cadmium, mercury and radio-active wastes into the land and waters around them. Some sites also have physical dangers like open shafts and empty buildings.

Abandoned mines are a serious and immediate danger to human health and the environment. They are already costing taxpayers millions of dollars in clean-up, cancers, lost fishery and farm income, and they stand to cost billions more.

In the proposal we ask the government to allocate funds toward work on these recommendations in the 2000 federal budget as part of the contaminated sites initiative. We have asked different ministers for support based on their particular area of responsibility:

- Environment – to take the lead on the initiative.

- Indian Affairs and Northern Development – to improve their inventory of northern sites, lands of aboriginal use or interest that are being affected by orphaned mine sites and to exercise properly their fiduciary responsibility for these sites.
- Fisheries – to support the initiative especially as it is related to Section 35 and 36 of the Fisheries Act
- Human Resources Development – to undertake a study of the employment creation potential of community-based monitoring and remediation strategies, and research and development of new technologies for mine reclamation.
- Health – to undertake a study of the health costs for Canadians of orphaned and abandoned mine sites, and to provide funds for site specific monitoring of the health of people down-stream from contaminated mine sites.
- Natural Resources Canada – to support the initiative, provide the data necessary for a thorough inventory of federal sites, and to undertake the research necessary for the development of technologies to reclaim sites in ways that make “perpetual care” unnecessary.
- Finance – to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to recover the costs of reclamation and identification of sites from the mining industry.
- Treasury Board – to ensure that the liabilities associated with federal sites are reflected in the public accounts in line with the 1995 report of the Auditor General.

More information is available on our web site.

Environmental, Human Rights Repercussions of Mining Investment in Ghana, West Africa

When foreign investment is encouraged in the absence of adequate controls, the results can be very disturbing. This was one of the themes coming out of the “Mining, development, and social conflicts in Africa” conference held by the Third World Network (TWN) in Accra, Ghana on November 14-18, 1999. Participants got to see first hand the impacts of gold mining and exploration on poor farming communities in the Western Region of Ghana.

Several Canadian companies operating in the region, including Repadre and St. Jude Resources, are benefiting from favourable treatment by the government at the expense of local people and the environment. The Canadian government and international multilateral agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

have encouraged policies favouring foreign direct investment in mining.

The results are pretty overwhelming. Mining laws have been re-written to favour foreign mining companies. Mining concessions have been allowed on forest reserves in the country’s last remaining rain forest. The rivers are suffering chemical and wastewater contamination. Small scale miners are being squeezed out. And whole villages are relocated away from their ancestral lands, given trivial amounts of compensation amounts for damages, or even bulldozed if they resist.

MiningWatch Canada has joined TWN and other groups in Ghana and throughout the world in condemning this situation, and we will be working with the Canadian government and local NGOs to find solutions.

“On the Ground” – A workshop on the research needs of communities affected by mining

April 14-16: MiningWatch Canada, together with the Canadian Consortium for International Co-operation (CCISD), is hosting a workshop in Ottawa of 25-30 community leaders from rural and indigenous communities affected by mining around the world.

Participants will share their experience in dealing with mining activities and figure out the kinds of research they need in order to respond effectively to the impacts of large-scale mining on their communities. The workshop will enable leaders from these communities to develop a relationship with one another and learn from each other’s experiences and expertise. Participants will come from

Canada and the US and from Suriname, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Guyana, Ghana, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

During the workshop, a booklet – the “Collective Memory” – will be produced so that participants can take it home with them. At the end of the workshop, the organising committee will work to pull learnings together into a research framework for academic and funding institutions.

Funding for the workshop is from a variety of sources, including the Mining Policy Research Initiative of the International Development Research Centre.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Act under review

Five years after it came into force, it is time to look at the effectiveness of the Canadian Environmental As-

essment Act (CEAA). Under the law, after five years the Minister of Environment must report to Parliament on the

adequacy of the law and its implementation, and propose needed changes.

Through the Canadian Environmental Network's Environmental Assessment and Planning Caucus, we are involved in the public consultations being sponsored by the Environmental Assessment Agency. This process will continue through March, at which point the interdepartmental wrangling will begin, leading to a Cabinet document to be submitted by the Minister by December. Any legislative amendments would be initiated at that time.

It is our hope that the Act and its regulations will be changed to prevent some of the serious problems we have

been seeing, where federal responsibilities are not being taken seriously, environmental requirements are not being enforced, and whole areas of responsibility, such as Crown Corporations, are simply left out. We are pushing specifically for the Act to apply to the Export Development Corporation (see previous Newsletter for details).

For details on the five-year review process, you can visit the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's web site at <http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/.ceaa>; for background on the Canadian Environmental Network and the Caucus's work on the five-year review, visit the CEN's web site at <http://www.cen.web.net/>.

Mining Watch Canada Launches Regional Grants Program

Mining Watch Canada has initiated a small regional grants program. The goal of the program is to strengthen the capacity of people in communities affected by mining activities to assert their needs and rights. We will fund travel and exchange between community leaders and education and advocacy activities. Maximum grants are \$1500. Grant applications are due January 31 and September 30 annually. The applicant must be a grassroots organization with limited funds that relies on volunteers for the majority of its work and has demonstrated the capacity to accomplish the project. We have provided funding to three projects since it started:

Minding the Mines in Northern Ontario

Sponsored by Northwatch, this two-day workshop in November provided a starting point for citizen participation in mine monitoring and approval processes. The project introduced citizens to opportunities under provincial and federal legislation to build capacity and understanding at a local level, similar to the citizen capacity that has developed in the area of forest management planning, where the public participate in a very regular and ongoing fashion in the approvals process.

The panel, plenary and workshop sessions included:

- developing a map of workshop participants' mining related concerns
- information sharing around particular mine-related environmental concerns
- a panel of experts on health, safety and workplace perspectives

First Annual General Meeting for MiningWatch Canada

The first annual general meeting for MiningWatch Canada will be held in Toronto on Saturday, March 4 at 9am, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education on Bloor Street. The business portion of the meeting takes place from 9 am to 10 am. Two exciting workshops will follow:

Workshop 1: *Getting the law obeyed: A panel on monitoring and enforcement in Canada*

- a panel of experts on the regulatory approval processes for mineral exploration and mine development, mine operations and water quality monitoring, mine closure and remediation
- a panel of experts on new and innovative remediation techniques and approaches

Millenium Tribute to the Uranium Ore Carriers of Denendeh

We contributed \$1500 to EleRae for this important multi-media presentation about the Dene people who worked in the Eldorado uranium mines at Port Radium during the Second World War, many of them carrying on their backs the ore that would create the atom bombs to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Most of them later died of radiation poisoning.

The exhibit is accompanied by a variety of activities during its showing in Yellowknife. Cindy Kenny Gilday is the exhibit's creator, and it is supported by the Dene Leadership Council. We have also been providing some support in trying to get funding support to bring the exhibit to different venues, including the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa.

Community Mine Monitoring Program

This project of the Yukon Conservation Society aims to provide training for community members of the Yukon and northern British Columbia to learn practical hands-on skills for monitoring impacts caused by mines in the "backyard of their communities." We are helping to pay for the costs of field sampling and laboratory analysis.

We will examine current problems with monitoring and enforcement of environmental mining standards in Canada, and explore a range of strategies and legal tools to improve monitoring and enforcement of environmental mining standards.

- Colin Chambers (CIELAP) – Overview of environmental mining policy and law in Canada: key issues and concerns for protecting public interest

- Ramani Nadarajah (CELA) – Compliance and regulation in Ontario: the impacts of the Harris approach to 'streamlining' regulations
- Brennain Lloyd (NorthWatch) – Compliance problems: community impacts and priorities for monitoring and enforcement
- Alan Young (EMCBC) – Streamlining and deregulation – public interest and public service implications and opportunities
- Doug Chapman (SLDF/EBR) – Private prosecution strategies and the Environmental Bureau of Investigation model

Workshop 2: *Using investor strategies to change corporate practices*

Canadian stock-markets are recognized as providing a favourable environment for raising capital to finance

Stopping Mining in Tombstone Park

This month, after years of public consultations and negotiations, the Tr'ondek Hwech'in, with the support of environmental groups like CPAWS-Yukon, succeeded in getting 216,000 acres in the Yukon set aside as a park. Tombstone Territorial Park is an area of extraordinary beauty, that contains many sacred sites and places of archaeological significance.

The establishing of the park was fought by the Yukon Prospectors and Developers Association and the Yukon Chamber of Mines. In a letter to the Yukon premier published in *The Whitehorse Star* (November 9, 1999), they claim that the Tombstone area contains "rocks with some of the highest known mineral potential in the Yukon... known high-grade gold occurrences... (and) one of the largest undeveloped uranium resources in North America."

In the face of this, the Tr'ondek Hwech'in and thousands of people in the Yukon have decided that the high-

Communications:

Our web site is finally up and running. Pay a visit to www.canada.miningwatch.ca to catch up on the latest news from MiningWatch Canada, consult our documentation, or look at some eye-catching maps of acid mine drainage sites in Canada.

Since the last newsletter, we've issued press releases regarding the involvement of Canadian gold mining interests in police shootings in Ghana; the federal government's billion-dollar liability for abandoned mines; the visit of Indonesian environmentalist Anto Sanganji to Canada to highlight the risks around Inco's operations in Sulawesi; and the shortcomings of the Mining Association of Canada's environmental report for 1999.

mining. The workshop is in three parts.

The first part, with panelists Moira Hutchinson and Eugene Ellman, is designed to help us better understand the exact mechanisms and features of these markets that make them beneficial for raising money for Canadian based mining companies, and to identify aspects of the current investment arena that may be fruitfully targeted for reform.

The second part will look at the role shareholders may be able to play in particular campaigns. Peter Chapman will analyse some of the strengths and weaknesses of shareholder activism in the Talisman campaign.

The third part of the workshop will be an examination, based on these perspectives, of the strategic effectiveness of investor-focused actions.

est and best use of the land is not mining but wilderness.

Now the nascent park is under threat from a tiny exploration company, Canadian United Minerals, centred in Dawson City. They have been exploring in the Tombstones since 1996 and have staked a number of claims there. In December they made four applications for new permits to carry out advanced mining and exploration in the Park. They also have plans for an all-season 46 kilometre road beside the Blackstone River through the middle of the Park.

After the Tr'ondek Hwech'in, CPAWS-Yukon and MiningWatch intervened to stop the Canadian United Minerals permits, the applications have been reduced to one, and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has agreed to hold public consultations on the permit.

This is an important land-use campaign, and we are proud to be part of it.

We sent out a short piece called *Balancing the Books: The Hidden Costs of Mining* in response to the annual mining industry Parliamentary lobby day. We also made a submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs regarding the Export Development Corporation (see Newsletter #1 for details on this campaign). *Mining's Toxic Orphans: A Plan for Action on Federal Contaminated and Unsafe Mine Sites* was submitted to the relevant cabinet ministers.

Press response has been very positive; for example, our piece on federal liability for abandoned mines was widely picked up in the Northern media, where most of the federal responsibility lies.