

Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis
(Secular Franciscan Order)
Our Lady of the Angels
Regional Fraternity of
Western Canada
Irene Manning, ofs, Regional Minister
(original included address)

13 March 2017

The Honourable Christy Clark, MLA, Premier of British Columbia
The Honourable Bill Bennett, MLA, Minister of Energy & Mines
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
V8V 1X4

Dear Premier Clark and Minister Bennett,

Extractive Industries

Extractive industries and their effect on sustainable integral human development especially human rights and environmental protection are one of the major concerns of the world wide Franciscan Family. We are Catholics following in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi and represented at the United Nations by Franciscans International. Our concerns have been given new impetus by the support given to them by Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*: *On Care for Our Common home* which was addressed to the whole world and received widespread approval from people of different faiths and no faith in God.

Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity represents the Secular Franciscans of Western Canada composed mainly of lay people with jobs and families and therefore a stake in the economy but also a great concern for human rights and the environment.

We have two main specific concerns in this area at the present time; first, the Ajax mine and second, the effect of corporate financial donations on mining policy.

First, the Ajax Mine near Kamloops, to which the Stk'emplupsemc te Secwepemc First Nation (SSN) does not give its free, prior and informed consent.

We ask that our British Columbia Government honour the recent Indigenous Review Panel Decision to Reject the Ajax Mine. This panel, after carefully examining the potential benefits and impacts of the project, concluded that it would bring about irreversible and unacceptable impacts to the land, waters, and people. These include lakes and archeological sites dating back 7,000 years, and land to which the SSN claims title (and aboriginal rights) for which there is a strong prima facie case.

We believe in these two principles: first, the principle pro homine - in case of any doubt, regulatory norms should be interpreted to favour the full enjoyment of human rights & second, the principle in dubio pro natura - in case of any doubt as to the scope of environmental protections, they should be applied in the way most favourable to protect nature.

In addition to impacts on First Nations, the Polish-owned KGHM mine would affect Kamloops residents' health and well-being. If approved, the low grade, copper-gold mine would become the largest open pit ever mined on the edge of a city the size of Kamloops (population 90,000) in North America. Evidence from a comparable mine, the Malartic open pit mine in Québec, should serve as another reason for caution.

Ajax would be too big and too close to Kamloops: less than 1.6 km from the closest homes and water wells, and within 6 kilometres of 12 schools, 4 seniors' residences, and 1 hospital. Air pollution, noise impacts, daily blasts, ground tremors, water contamination, and potential catastrophic spills are all major concerns.

Our second concern is B.C.'s dysfunctional mining regulatory system. We wish to add our voice to the growing pressure for reform from communities, organisations, and First Nations for a Judicial Commission of Public Inquiry to investigate, rectify, and improve the mining regulatory regime in B.C. This regime exposes taxpayers, the environment, private land owners, municipalities, and indigenous peoples to unnecessary and unacceptable levels of risks, impacts, and conflicts.

A specific concern is the unsecured environmental liability of contaminated mine site clean-up costs of over \$1.5 billion. We applaud your order of 25 Aug 2016 to Teck Resources to implement a remediation plan for the abandoned mine in Jordan River by 1 June 2017. But what about the other sites?

B.C. saw the worst mining spill in Canada's history - the 2014 Mount Polley mine disaster - which most independent observers have attributed not only to poor technical and corporate practices, but also to poor regulatory oversight; one that is detrimental to water, fishing, farming, tourism and health, all of which are as important as jobs and affect future generations. What effective action have you taken about that, apart from allowing mining to continue?

We realize our government could give corporations subsidies to develop mines to create jobs. The corporations make profits so why are they let off the hook for clean up? How did that happen? We are in favour of Fair Mining and we expect our government to act both in the taxpayers' and the common interest and not in special corporate interests.

Last year B.C.'s Auditor General said the provincial Ministry of Energy and Mines was in a conflict of interest and "at risk of regulatory capture" i.e. acting in the interest of those being regulated rather than the public. Does our BC Government act as corporate shells rather than in the common interest? If so, could this be because in B.C. there are few limits on political donations from corporate interests? Is there effective transparency in donations? Exactly how does money influence our politics? Do mining corporations expect favours in return for their donations? If so, how might this influence government decisions on their behalf? The process is

characterised by some as the “wild west” and “pay to play” - leading to the public perception that the process is corrupt and in dire need of reform. On 11 March we learned that Elections BC is referring its investigation into indirect political contributions and other potential contraventions of the Election Act to the RCMP. We eagerly await their report and our government’s reaction. We add our voice to the requests for meaningful reform.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns and requests and we hope for a favorable response.

Know that you and our government are in our prayers as you work for the common good.

Yours sincerely, pax et bonum,

(original signed by)

Irene Manning, ofs
Regional Minister

apc/im