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Tom Shypitka
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Cranbrook, B.C.
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April 3, 2019

Dear Mr. Shypitka,

I am writing to you to express my concern and dismay about comments you made in a recent Facebook post, which were reported in a March 27 article on Fernie.com, "Sierra Club says NO to New Coal Mines." I have attached a screenshot of the comments.

I am deeply concerned that you described Sierra Club BC as "eco-terrorists." Sierra Club BC is a registered charity that has existed in this province for 50 years. We operate entirely within the laws of Canada and British Columbia and abide by the rules that govern all charities operating in Canada.

Our position on mining in the Elk Valley – contrary to your portrayal – is to call for a moratorium on any *new* mines or mine *expansions* in the valley until pollution from existing mining operations is brought under control.

Existing mining operations are causing selenium levels in water well above the maximum mandated by the Province under the Elk Valley Water Quality Plan. This is an environmental and public health concern, given the toxicity of selenium, which has made the water from a number of wells in the valley unsafe to drink. Testing of fish in Lake Koocanusa shows that dangerous levels of selenium are building up in their flesh and reproductive systems.

Before any new mines or mine expansions are approved, we need to address the water quality problems caused by existing mines. Teck recently published a summary of predicted pollution levels, which makes it clear they will be in violation of provincial permits over the next four years by allowing selenium pollution in Lake Koocanusa and at numerous upstream locations to build up to well above permitted maximums.

B.C.'s Auditor General has pointed out the B.C. government's weak permitting practices and lack of enforcement when it comes to water quality. Environment Canada is considering charges against Teck for polluting watersheds and harming fish populations.

Despite some mining practices in B.C. improving over the decades (though more improvements are needed, as the Mount Polley disaster demonstrated), mining practices in the Elk Valley have not changed significantly when it comes to curtailing water pollution. The problem is getting worse, not better.

You make the claim that mining coal "will lead us to a low carbon economy" and "help us reduce our GHGs." Exporting approximately 24 million tonnes of coal from the Elk Valley per year yields roughly 60-

63 million tonnes of CO2 pollution when the coal is burned to produce steel. That's almost exactly equal to B.C.'s entire annual reported carbon emissions, which were 62 million tonnes in 2017. Mining operations in the Elk Valley make up three per cent of B.C.'s reported annual emissions.

Your unfounded claim that we are funded from the U.S. as part of a scam to benefit the U.S. economy is a distraction from the important issue of defending drinking water for the people of the Elk Valley. As a registered charity, Sierra Club BC publicly discloses our funding including how much comes from outside of Canada. These figures are available on the Canada Revenue Agency's website. The most recent figures show almost eighty per cent of our revenue comes from Canadian sources. Our funders are also listed in our annual report, available on our website.

Pollution, whether in the air or water, knows no borders. Sierra Club BC welcomes investments from people and foundations, from within and outside B.C., who recognize the need for collaborative solutions to protect water, biodiversity, and global life-support systems.

Vastly far more foreign investment goes into Canada's oil and gas and mining sectors—a total of \$162 billion in 2017. We would prefer to see that kind of money being invested in the transition to a renewable energy future that supports a liveable climate and resilient communities, where drinking water is safe and extreme storms, drought and unprecedented wildfires aren't undermining our security.

And it bears noting that the influence of resource industries on government policy is heavily shaped by foreign interests and funding. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, for example, which represents the oil and gas sector, is a huge lobbying and public relations operation, with a budget likely into the tens of millions. Its membership includes multiple foreign corporations, including U.S.-based Koch Industries, China National Offshore Oil Corporation, Petrochina and Malaysia-based Petronas. Teck is also a member.

Sierra Club BC welcomes vigorous public debate about important issues such as climate change, mining and the safety of drinking water. But these debates must be based upon facts, not misinformation and the vilification of others that divides us and all too often leads to tragedy.

It is deeply irresponsible for an elected official to accuse Sierra Club BC of being "eco-terrorists." I request you retract your comments and apologize.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Caitlyn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Caitlyn Vernon
Campaigns Director
Sierra Club BC

Attachment

CC: Peter Milobar, BC Liberal Environment Critic



Tom Shypitka This is so dangerous.
As **Kent Petovello** points out, George Heyman (our now Minister of Environment) was an executive director of the Sierra Club of BC. This group has been identified as being funded by wealthy land owners from the US and large NGOs like the Rockefeller Foundation and Tides to shut down our industry and/or landlock our province so that we send our unrefined products to the US only. This scam is worth Billions to the US economy. It is the fear mongering that is highlighted in the Sierra Club's messaging that is very concerning and is dividing our province. Mining is what is going to lead us to a low carbon economy, to help us reduce our GHGs.
The mining industry has come leaps and bounds over the past 100 years. We are evolving making mining safer, cleaner, and more environmentally friendly. We should be celebrating our mining practices not condemning them. We have got better and we will continue to get better.
One only needs to look to jurisdiction like Africa, Saudi Arabia, Chile, Venezuela, and look at their pathetic track record on safety, human rights, and environmental standard to realize that shutting down industry here promotes more suffrage to people (mostly children) in these sweat shop countries and will encourage terrible environmental standards that will effect us all in Global Climate Change.
Don't get taken in by eco-terrorists. British Columbians do it best and our workers, corporations and unions should be celebrated along with it.

Like · Reply · 1w



Gerry Powell You remember this when you form govt. and help get Albertas oil to tidewater as well ok, thanks.

Like · Reply · 6d · Edited



Tom Shypitka **Gerry Powell** oil is getting from well head to tidewater right now.
Only difference is that this government prefers sending it by rail. This goes through a lot more eco-sensitive landscapes and populated areas.
We need to break away from US dependancy and get our product to Asia.
This is better environmentally on so many levels.
Thanks for your comments.



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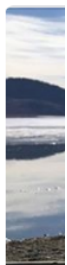
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