

PRESENTATION: IMPACT OF INDUSTRY NEXT TO COMMUNITY

Presentation For:

Federal Panel Review of Environmental Review Process

Prepared By:

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CONTEXT:

As you are probably very aware of by this time, we in Kamloops are in the midst of an environmental review of the proposed open pit copper/gold mine - KGHM Ajax. This project is located - on our very doorstep. I am Chair of the Aberdeen Neighbourhood Association, a neighbourhood of 11,000 residents on the south-west border of Kamloops immediately adjacent to the proposed mine site. Approximately 6 years ago we were made aware of the possibility of this mine being established just next to and uphill from our neighbourhood. The closest homes and indeed an elementary school would be as close as 1.5 km. away. To most of us it was and still is incomprehensible that this idea ever got off the ground - is it really possible that the government would allow a foreign owned corporation (or any for that matter) to entertain the idea of establishing one of the largest open pit mine in North America right next to a community of 90,000 people? But here we are, halted at day 108 of the 180 review period waiting for the proponent to reconsider all the multiple questions and concerns brought forward during the public comment period.

As a participant in the Environmental Review Process as designed for this project - the amalgamated Federal-Provincial review - I have had first-hand experience in how this process has worked (or not worked) for those of us with grave concerns for the well-being of our community, our health, our environment and indeed, our safety and security.

The proponent can be described as the "Goliath" - a huge foreign owned mining corporation with no local knowledge but with the funds and expertise to anticipate the resistance from the community and the ability to quickly put their marketing machine into high gear to convince the public, the business community and investors that this was the best stimulus for our economy and in no way would have any negative impact as all concerns could be mitigated and if we could just wait for the "science" they would prove it. To the lay person, they were very convincing.

Our community, the "David" in this story, was at a considerable disadvantage right from the get go. We were side swiped! We had an idea that this couldn't possibly be a good idea so close to our homes. We, and really, only those who have lived here for a while understand implicitly where the winds blow from (straight down the hill 75% of the time), how DRY those winds are all year long, how we already have huge issues with underground water and slope stability and how we enjoy and value our access to nature (out my back door) and a clean, quiet environment. We too know how our air quality has changed over the last 10 years to the extent we often do not fall within recommended guidelines. Our air is already changing with the presence of a new mine on the west end of our City. To understand how a mine might impact the surrounding environment has required a tremendous effort on the part of concerned groups and citizens. We have mobilized and organized, studied and been compelled to pay (through fundraising efforts) for our own expert studies. This is a result of total lack of trust in the process we are going through and a sense that NO ONE is advocating for US.

Aberdeen Neighbourhood Association (ANA) was invited to participate on the Community Advisory Group where our questions and concerns could be brought to the proponent through the BCEAO and CEAA. Much of the information requested at these meetings however, was either withheld (proprietary ownership) or not available until the proposal (science) was completed and made public. These meetings were beneficial only for the proponent and were very unsatisfactory for those of us wanting more information. Access to studies and related scientific data (assay results for instance) was very limited. Meetings - whether they be CAG

meetings or public information sessions - were strictly controlled by the proponent with limited information made available and no opportunity for dialogue or debate. Questions were usually deferred - the answers would be available when the proposal was completed. It was as if they needed to be seen as being transparent but were truly being manipulative.

When the 18,000 page document was finally made public and the “science” revealed, many groups were prepared to critically scrutinize their methodology. Experts in the fields of air quality assessment, hydrology, geology and health effects were hired independently to assist in our appraisal. Most of the proponents arguments of “no harm” are based on their air quality assessment of little or no discernible effects or impacts at 94% mitigation of dust. How they are to achieve the 94% was not made clear but they want us to believe this is possible. They were unwilling to reveal what the model projects if their target could not be reached and they had only say 50 or 75% mitigation. Everything from the data used to input the model to the lack of testing the model in real time were found lacking. And this is just one area that has been criticized and found misleading or lacking in sound science - water run off and contamination, effects of air blast and vibration, the list goes on. Concerning especially for us in Aberdeen is a total denial on their part to acknowledge any soil/slope instability when we have grave concerns being built on a previous landslide with known underground water issues. We are very worried.

ANA itself presented a 108 page comment to the BCEAO and CEAA during the public comment period. We are waiting to see if our concerns are addressed.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS:

PROBLEM: Large corporation/industry allowed to insinuate self on the doorstep of a community next to a neighbourhood with resultant isolation of said community left to defend itself.

The CAG, as stated previously, worked almost solely for the benefit of the proponent . The perception for us is that there is no one out there advocating for us - the members of the community that will bare the brunt of any ill effects. All levels of government have been disappointingly non present for us. Provincially, the current government has promised to open x-number of mines by the end of their term so even our MLA’s are not willing to acknowledge any problems with the current process and are more concerned about jobs, economy and resource extraction than the welfare of the citizens of this community. The City is split between those who want to question the science and those that believe this is the best thing that will ever happen to Kamloops. Are they afraid of alienating constituents? Our MP is staying at arms length from the decision and states only support for the process.

The relationship between the proponent, the review bodies (BCEAO and CEAA) and the community have become very adversarial. Those opposing the mine are isolated with little access to honest, open dialogue with anyone.

SOLUTION:

- first and foremost - this project should never have got off the ground in the first place. There should be establishment of guidelines or zones that do not allow industry (mines) to establish in areas so close to a community. There is a need for review of the BC Mineral Tenure Act so this does not happen again.
- use of local knowledge to establish these “zones”

- federal leadership on assessing cumulative environmental effects - can a certain airshed/watershed accept any more environmental stress and remain sustainable?
- appointment of a community advocate to assist those that may be impacted by industrial development to wade through the environmental process and bureaucracy (we have NO ONE that is listening to or fighting for our concerns)

PROBLEM: Lack of public trust in the process as it stands now with the proponent presenting their “science” and then the public having to do the work to assess the methodology and findings

Several requests for an Independent Federal Panel Review were turned down by 2 consecutive federal ministers of environment. Much lack of confidence and skepticism in the process would have been allayed had this been available to us. We have witnessed first-hand how science can be manipulated by those with an agenda in mind. Our experts have come to very different conclusions than those of the proponent. The science, as it stands, at the very least does not prove conclusively that there will be no ill effects.

SOLUTION:

- the Science needs to be absolutely independent from the parties that have anything to gain from the decisions - ie - the proponent or the government .
- use of the “Precautionary Principle” where if an action has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, in the absence of scientific consensus that the action is not harmful, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking the action. This principle implies there is a social responsibility to protect the public from exposure to harm when scientific investigation has found plausible risk.

PROBLEM: The mental health effects/stress on a community when faced with the introduction of an industry that causes such divisiveness among members.

This mine is coming between friends, neighbours and even family members. It has become so adversarial that it cannot be spoken about in public - people are afraid for their jobs and their status in the community. I have been forced to curtail my fundraising efforts for organizations such as the Kamloops Symphony and Festival of the Arts as the individuals and organizations I previously solicited for donations are now fully aware of my stance on the mine and they are Kamloops businessmen and investors and are outspokenly pro mine.

There is also the stress of the uncertainty of what the future will look like. What will it really be like to live under this mine? We hear about homeowners in other places like Malartic Quebec and what they have experienced only bodes for more conflict and problems in the future despite the promises of “no ill effects”

KGHM will not talk to us directly about compensation. They do not agree to baseline assessments of our properties. Their plan for dealing with complaints after the fact puts all the burden of proof on the homeowner. Some of the science that has been conducted independently is saying we could be looking at major structural damage to our homes, noise, light and vibration annoyances and of course more air quality and health effects than the proponent is willing to acknowledge.

Even the City of Kamloops does not seem willing to include us in any compensation/mitigation talks. Our request to present to Council our concerns about property value loss after the launch

of a class action law suit in Malartic over this issue was denied. It is apparent there is no policy or vehicle in place to help us resolve this impasse.

SOLUTION:

- an independent scientific study of potential effects would be more acceptable and go far in alleviating some of the stress and fear.
- trust will only be established when the science is independent of government and industry
- the community needs to be engaged in a much more meaningful way - a huge open pit mine could not possibly have absolutely NO EFFECTS so please be more honest with us
- costs and benefits need to be more clearly outlined - what are the trade-offs? We don't want to hear just the best case scenario - what mechanisms are in place for the worst case scenario? Can we trust that you are aware of the hazards? Can we trust that monitoring will be to the highest standard and who will be responsible for that monitoring? Should companies be forced to hire independent contractors to do the monitoring to insure the results are being truthfully reported?
- an independent arbiter/advocate appointed by the government working for the community to ensure that everything possible is done to protect their interests
- the proponent should have to accept responsibility for baseline assessment before any development occurs for any residence within a prescribed distance from any proposed industrial site
- possibility of loss of property value needs to be acknowledged and adequately compensated for
- no project should move forward without a compensation/mitigation plan in place. This needs to be comprehensive and include the above recommendations. A system of receiving grievances or complaints and dealing with them on a case by case basis after the fact is NOT SUFFICIENT.
- recognition on the part of government and the proponent that individuals have different sensitivities and although most may not notice the noise or vibration some will find it intolerable