



## Take Action!

### 1. IF YOU'RE A UNION MEMBER AND HAVE A PENSION FUND:

Find out if your pension has money invested in Canadian mining companies, which companies are involved, and what activities those companies are engaged in. Share this information with CUPE Ontario's International Solidarity Committee.

### 2. ENGAGE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:

Encourage your union to get educated on the global impact of Canadian mining companies.

### 3. PASS A RESOLUTION:

Sanction Canadian mining companies engaged in abuses.

### 4. LOBBY TO SUPPORT PRIVATE MEMBERS BILLS:

Bill C-354 which would see Canada's civil courts open to international victims of Canadian mining corporations.

### 5. SUPPORT DEMONSTRATIONS AND SHAREHOLDERS' ACTIONS:

Organize during annual general meetings of large Canadian mining corporations like Barrick Gold or Gold Corp implicated in global abuses.

### 6. GET INVOLVED:

Fight for justice in the growing struggle against mining injustice.

## Further reading and action:

- 🔗 <http://www.solidarityresponse.net>
- 🔗 <http://protestbarrick.net/index.php>
- 🔗 <http://www.minesandcommunities.org>
- 🔗 <http://www.miningwatch.ca>
- 🔗 <http://www.rightsaction.org>

## CUPE Ontario International Solidarity Committee

<http://www.cupe.on.ca/internationalsolidarity>

Email: [campaign@cupe.on.ca](mailto:campaign@cupe.on.ca)

# Canadian Mining Corporations: Abuses at Home and Abroad

Beginning in the 1990s and accelerating over the last decade, Canadian corporations have become dominant in mining operations and investments in the global south. The Canadian state has promoted this expansion by the introduction of tax incentives encouraging corporate mining activities, by providing credit through the state-owned Export Development Corporation (EDC), and through political support for neoliberal measures such as bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) ratified with countries Chile, Peru and Colombia. These Free Trade Agreements are meant to protect and promote investments and profits of Canadian mining and resource extraction corporations who are active internationally.

Currently, Latin America is the single most important regional destination for Canadian mining activities. In 2008, more than half of Canadian mining's global assets of \$57 billion were located in Latin America with Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Argentina the top destinations.

Africa is the second important and rapidly expanding destination for Canadian mining investment. These investments, which in 2010 exceeded \$23.6 billion, are concentrated in South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Madagascar, Zambia, Tanzania, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mauritania.

Parts of the Asia Pacific region, including the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, are also important sites generating Canadian mining activity and corporate profits.

Historically, mining and resource extraction has been a major component of the Canadian economy. According to MiningWatch Canada, mining takes place in many parts of Canada, mostly on Aboriginal lands, causing environmental, economic, social and health damage to a wide range of communities. Ontario has the largest metal mining sector of all provinces in Canada, and accounts for one-third of Canada's mineral production, generating \$5.7 billion each year mainly in exports of nickel, gold and copper.

## Why Social Justice & Environmental Advocates Should Be Alarmed

The widespread negative impact of Canadian mining corporate activity has been well-documented by effected communities as well as Canadian non-governmental organizations like MiningWatch Canada, Rights Action, and KAIROS and grassroots groups like Mining Injustice Solidarity Network.

Organizations like these carry out academic research, journalism, on-the-ground projects, ongoing advocacy, government-lobbying and public education campaigns to expose the devastating effect of Canadian mining operations.

All photos credited to: Allan Lissner



## The Negative Impact of Canadian & Multinational Mining Corporations

- **Environmental contamination and depletion of natural resources** such as water and soil through the use of leaching and chemical processes necessary for mining operations involving cyanide, arsenic, mercury and other toxic metals/tailings/emissions that seep into soil and air or are dumped into lakes and rivers.
- **Destroyed farmlands and uprooted communities** caused by large-scale mining operations, particularly uranium and precious metal mining, jeopardizing the economic and social survival of communities.
- **Social conflict created within communities** when large-scale mining operations bribe local community members and government officials.
- **Jobs provided tend to be** dangerous, low wage, short term and precarious.
- **Human rights violations** including threats, attacks, killings and criminalization or detention of community and environmental activists opposed to corporate abuses taking place on their lands.
- **Aggressive encroachment on lands and territories of Aboriginal and peasant-farming communities** often leading to displacement of communities and violations of national and international Indigenous rights.
- **The persecution and murder of mining justice activists**, with the wilful negligence or complicity of Canadian mining corporations, often through the use of subcontracted paramilitary groups or hired killers.

## Canadian Corporations Implicated in Abuses

### **GOLDCORP**

*Headquartered in Vancouver:*

Gold producing giant active in the US, Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. Responsible for contaminating the Siria Valley (Honduras) with toxic heavy metals from its San Marlin mine, causing health problems with local population and livestock.

### **BARRICK GOLD**

*Headquartered in Toronto:*

World's largest gold producer which is exploring, building and operating huge, open pit gold mines in British Columbia, Ontario, Argentina, Chile, Philippines & Papua New Guinea and on nearly every continent across the world and implicated in countless abuses.

### **PACIFIC RIM COMPANY**

*Headquartered in Vancouver:*

Canadian mining company that is using provisions in the US-Central American Free Trade Agreement to sue the El Salvador for US \$77million for refusing to grant the company permission to begin operations at its El Dorado gold mine. In 2009, three community activists (Marcelo Rivera, Ramiro Rivera and Dora Sorto) who were involved in the strong opposition to the proposed mine's environmental impact, were disappeared, tortured and murdered. The intellectual authors of these crimes have, yet, to be identified or prosecuted; however, it is clear that they were murdered due to their opposition to the mine.

### **BLACK FIRE EXPLORATION LIMITED**

*Headquartered in Calgary:*

On November 27, 2009, Mariano Abarca Roblero, a prominent Mexican anti-mining activist and one of the most prominent figures to publicly denounce the negative social and environmental impacts of Blackfire's open-pit barite mine in Chiapas, Mexico, was shot dead. Three current and former Blackfire employees have been arrested for his murder.

### **ANVIL MINING LIMITED**

*Headquartered in the Northwest Territories:*

Canadian copper mining company facing serious allegations that it was implicated in the massacre of more than 70 unarmed civilians in the Democratic Republic of Congo in October 2004. The tragedy occurred during an operation by the Congolese military in response to an attempt by a small group of rebels to take over the mine's operation. Company officials admitted providing trucks, drivers and logistical support to the army during the events, but deny responsibility in the murders. An Association representing Congolese civilians filed a class action suit against Anvil Mining Ltd. in a Montreal court in 2010 alleging that the company was involved in human rights abuses.

## Impact on Health, Safety, & Workers' Rights

In addition to the pervasive negative social and environmental impact effecting Indigenous and rural communities, large-scale Canadian and multinational mining operations have a record of disrespect for workers' rights including exploitative and unsafe working conditions.

According to scientists Carolyn Stephens and M. Ahern: **"Mining remains one of the most hazardous occupations in the world, both in terms of short term injuries and fatalities, but also due to long-term impacts such as cancers and respiratory conditions such as silicosis, asbestosis, and pneumoconiosis"**

*(Worker and Community Health Impacts Related to Mining Operations Internationally. A Rapid Review of The Literature. Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development, 2001:25).*

## Why the Struggle Against Mining Injustice is a LABOUR STRUGGLE

Union activists, with our roots in solidarity and social justice principles, need to be concerned and engaged with the struggle against mining injustice.

Internationally, Canadian mining and extractive industries play an integral part in implementing the Canadian Government's neoliberal agenda which prioritizes profits over human rights, workers' rights, healthy sustainable communities, and the environment.

These multinational corporations, active here and internationally, perceive the hard-won rights and benefits of unionized workers as an obstacle to maximizing their profits. They are determined to erode or remove these "obstacles" through concessions, anti-union legislation, and—in the worst cases—violence.

The Canadian state and government owned agencies like the Export Development Corporation and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provide generous subsidies, loans, and tax incentives to mining companies active abroad while denying or cutting-back funding supports for housing, healthcare, transportation, childcare, pensions and liveable wages here at home.

Agreements like the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement and others currently being promoted by economic elites in Canada will serve to increase the power of the Canadian mining and extractive industry to plunder valuable natural resources at the expense of Indigenous communities, farmers, and workers' worldwide.

## Union-Busting Neoliberal Attacks in Canada

Recently, unionized workers here in Canada faced union-busting attacks by the Brazilian-owned and managed mining giant Vale-Inco. In Sudbury, Port Colborne, and Voisey Bay, Labrador, more than 3,500 members of the United Steelworkers (USW) were forced to go on extended strikes in 2009/2010 to defend hard-won pensions and payment by the multinational of the "nickel bonus" (a cost-sharing benefit paid to Vale-Inco workers when the global price of nickel is high).

The 11-month strike in Sudbury by Vale-Inco workers was the longest industrial dispute in the over 100-year history of mining operations in the Sudbury basin. Even though Vale extracted twice as much profit from Ontario in 2 years than Inco had in the previous ten (2009 figures), their attacks on the workers was relentless.



Pension funds of unionized workers also have significant investments in Canadian and multinational mining companies. The Canada Pension Plan, a publicly-administered fund to which most working Canadians are legally required to contribute, holds equity worth about \$2.5 billion in publicly traded Canadian mining companies operating in the global south. These CCP investments, along with mining investments in a myriad of other pension plans, mean that workers in Canada and their unions are unknowingly financing the activities and abuses carried out by the mining companies.

Impunity for corporate abuses is endemic: currently, no legislation exists in Canada to hold corporations liable for overseas operations or abuses. Bill C-300 which would have meant Canadian companies engaged in abuses would be denied public funding was narrowly defeated in 2011. Current, "voluntary corporate social responsibility (CSR)" policies promoted by the Stephen Harper government, and pro-business mining advocates have proved to be completely ineffective. With the election of a Harper majority we can expect more of the same.