
General Council Proposal 2015-12

United Church of Canada Pension Board Divestment from Goldcorp

Proposal Name	United Church of Canada Pension Board Divestment from Goldcorp
Recipient	General Council 42
Originating Body	Kootenay Presbytery
Proposed Action	<p>That the 42nd General Council:</p> <p>respond to the ethical imperative of our faith as expressed in the social Policies of The United Church of Canada, and commitments to Partnership and Right Relations including support for free, prior and informed consent, by instructing the General Secretary to communicate to The United Church of Canada Pension Board (UCCPB) that the will of the church is to divest of its shares in Goldcorp and make public that divestment.</p>
Background	<p>Because of your money, you are complicit. Give your money to something that gives life. ~ Catholic Parish Committee in Defense of Mother Earth, San Miguel Ixtahuacan Nov. 2013 in meeting with the Mining the Connections/KAIROS Mining Delegation.</p> <p>We bring this proposal forward as an urgent concern for immediate attention. United Church, KAIROS and Canadian aboriginal partners have urged the UCCPB to publicly divest from Goldcorp. (1, 2) We are acutely aware of the ongoing suffering of indigenous Mayan communities, related to negative environmental, social and health impacts. The presence of the Marlin Mine for a period of more than nine years in Guatemala has resulted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• serious environmental damage, especially water contamination. (3)• disruption of community cohesion and an increase in community conflict.• an increase in domestic violence and family breakdown.• a huge increase in alcohol abuse and sex trade.• a loss of Mam, the principal indigenous language.• an increase in health issues including the spread of HIV/AIDS, skin lesions.• malnutrition among children due to inflated prices for basic products. <p>The statement of Beliefs and Guiding Principles for the Pension Plan of the United Church of Canada (2005) Article 33 states: Socially responsible investment procedures can be employed provided there is reasonable assurance that the best long term interest of the members is being served. The United Church has always affirmed that respect for human dignity and the well-being of the planet serve the long-term interests of pension plan members. United Church policies direct that maximizing economic return on investments must give way to economic justice, human rights, and environmental protection. (4)</p> <p>Since 2008, the UCCPB's ethical investment advisor, Jantizi Research (now Sustainalytics) has recommended against inclusion of Goldcorp in the UCCPB portfolio, due to ongoing community conflict. (UCCPB communications to Maritime Conference Mining the Connections Working Group.)</p> <p>Goldcorp continues to obtain exploration and exploitation licenses without the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous communities (required by the UN Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, Article 26.) (5) It has obtained licenses in regions where indigenous communities have voted massively against mining projects in municipal referenda and where Catholic diocesan and parish environmental justice committees are courageously resisting the presence of mining project.(6) In 2010, the Goldcorp-funded Human Rights Assessment recommended a moratorium on exploration,</p>

expansion and conversion of exploration to exploitation licenses, pending effective State involvement in consultation processes. Yet Goldcorp has extended the Marlin Mine underground and plans to develop the nearby Los Chocoyos open-pit mine.

The Cerro Blanco geo-thermal mine near the border with El Salvador threatens the eco-system providing water to 67% of Salvadorans. It was built despite water and soil scientists' warnings of a flawed environmental impact assessment. Goldcorp has suspended mine operations, citing gold prices. However, problems of extremely hot water and unstable soil containing a naturally high level of arsenic remain unresolved. The El Salvador Roundtable on Metallic Mining (UCC partner ADES (Economic and Social Development Association) is a lead member) and El Salvador's Ombudsperson seek the mine's permanent closure.(7)

The UCCPB contracts SHARE to engage with Goldcorp management. We question this involvement when our partners see no significant change after nearly a decade of management engagement. SHARE's management engagement takes place within a framework of ensuring the long-term value of the company, making it unlikely to take on issues that may reduce Goldcorp's financial value. (8)

Footnotes:

1. United Church, KAIROS partners: Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala, Conference of Evangelical Churches of Guatemala, CEIBA (Association for Community Development and Promotion), ADES (Social and Economic Development Association of Santa Marta, El Salvador) , www.kairoscanada.org/sustainability/resource-extraction/whose-development-reflections-on-my-visit-to-the-marlin-and-meeting-with-community-members/
2. Where Our Treasure Is, <http://marconf.ca/resources/treasure/> Messages from Bishop Ramazzini (Ecumenical Christian Council member) and Catholic parish leader, Sister Maudilia Lopez Cardona. p.9. Letter by a Canadian aboriginal woman, Cathy Gerroir, who has collaborated with the United Church in the Maritimes. p. 15
3. National Institute of Forensic Sciences March, 2013 report on government ministries' surface and groundwater samplings near the Marlin mine. Commission on Peace and Ecology www.ciel.org/Law_Communities/Guatemala/copae%202nd_water_report%20english.pdf
4. Examples: The United Church social policy One Earth Community –Ethical Principles for Environment and Development (1992), the resource Mission and Investing: A Guide for The United Church of Canada Congregations and Organizations (2002),resources that followed from Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire (2006) See Where Our Treasure Is, p. 15
5. issuu.com/karinzylsaw/docs/un_declaration_rights_indigenous_peoples
6. www.mimundo.org/2014/11/18/2014-11-mayan-communities-use-democracy-as-a-tool-to-safeguard-their-territory/
7. www.stopesmining.org/j25/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=81&Itemid=468
<http://portalfio.org/inicio/noticias/item/11811-el-salvador-la-pddh-presenta-el-informe-sobre-proyecto-minero-cerro-blanco-ubicado-en-guatemala.html>
8. Shareholder Association for Research and Education http://www.share.ca/files/SHARE-Human_Rights-Mining-Final.pdf

Financial Implications

Unknown