

November 23, 2009

The Honourable Gordon O'Connor, P.C., M.P.,  
Room 119-S Centre Block, House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr O'Connor:

As both concerned citizens and constituents, we are writing to ask you to reconsider your position against the adoption of Bill C-300, *An Act respecting Corporate Accountability for the Activities of Mining, Oil or Gas in Developing Countries*.

We have read the Bill with care, and studied the various arguments for and against. While we do not dispute that Canadian mining and extraction activities provide some measure of economic benefit to developing countries, these must be weighed against the fact and potential for creating harm if not carried out in a manner which responds to local needs on an ethical basis, as well as the level of local benefit which is provided. The reasons put forward by private sector opponents of C-300 appear to be dictated by twin concerns over costs and reputation. As catalogued in numerous articles and reports, most recently on November 22 in *The Star* (<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/article/729147--canadian-mining-firms-face-abuse-allegations>), Canadian mining companies are not exempt from allegations of abusive, unethical and environmentally-unsustainable practices. Many of them operate in countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where human rights violations and conflict are rampant and where industries have a history of aligning themselves with corrupt regimes. Some of these allegations are therefore likely to have a basis in fact.

Currently, there appear to be no Canadian laws which regulate practices of its mining companies abroad, a situation which does not exist in many other sectors. We also note that the Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Mining in Developing Countries – Corporate Social Responsibility*, recognizes the challenges associated with implementing an international code of Corporate Social Responsibility, many of which are still unmet. Recommendation 3 of this report reads in part "Strengthen or develop new mechanisms for monitoring the activities of Canadian mining companies in developing countries, and for dealing with complaints alleging socially and environmentally irresponsible conduct and human rights violations." Bill C-300 meets the essence of that recommendation without putting additional burdens on affected Canadian mining companies, save those of demonstrating in the court of Canadian public opinion that they are acting in a social responsible manner. Taking exception to this modest obligation would seem to imply a likelihood that some of them will be found wanting.

In the 2009 *Speech from the Throne*, the government committed itself to acting to protect the vulnerable. To attempt to do this in Canada while failing to recognize that the same obligation exists, or should exist, with respect to Canadian activities abroad, would appear to be travesty of global social responsibility. Knowing how long it takes to put in place international standards governing any sector, and knowing from experience the dire social conditions which prevail in many developing countries, it seems to us at least prudent and at best responsible for Canada to provide oversight leadership in this area. Bill C-300 provides that opportunity, without imposing on Canadian company's financially onerous legal conditions or punitive sanctions. We therefore urge you to vote for Bill C-300 at third reading.

Thank you for consideration of this matter.

Yours truly

Hal Whiteman

Rosemary Whiteman

cc: John McKay, M.P.  
Matthew Whiteman