

Rights Action
August 20, 2015

‘For The Love Of The Game’: Questioning why Rugby Canada accepted corporate sponsorship from Goldcorp Inc.

Rights Action shares this letter and encourages folks to: Send your own letters to Rugby Canada; Share this letter with family and friends; Re-post and re-distribute it.

- More information? / What to do? – See below

August 20, 2015

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Re: ‘For The Love Of The Game’: Questioning why Rugby Canada accepted corporate sponsorship from Goldcorp Inc.

Dear Mr. Aldous, Members of the Board and Rugby Friends,

My name is Charles Loren Sherlock and I am a lifelong player, fan, coach, and supporter of rugby – though my playing has slowed down!, and I am writing to express serious concern about the recent sponsorship agreement made between Rugby Canada and Goldcorp Inc.

I also write to share with you some facts about the devastating impacts of Goldcorp’s mining operations in Guatemala, Honduras, and elsewhere, which call into question whether it is appropriate for Rugby Canada to accept such a sponsorship and to endorse Goldcorp through advertising and space on our national team’s jerseys.

I do not write to you frivolously, but because of my longstanding connection to and love of the game of rugby. I see the recent sponsorship agreement as a step in the wrong direction, and I ask the Board to seriously re-consider this and any future agreements with Goldcorp. I believe that if our players,

coaches and friends knew more about the impacts of Goldcorp overseas, that they would share my concerns.

My Life With Rugby

I have had a long relationship with the game of rugby, beginning at age 14 in 1956. A young teacher arrived at the school I attended and introduced rugby at a gym class. It was love at first sight for me.

Over the next five decades, I have been a player, a player rep to the B.C. Rugby Union, a referee, a coach, a manager and a fundraiser. Through the years I have been blessed to have marvelous coaches, mentors and teammates. I have had the honour of playing with and against the rugby legends of the day, some of which now give back to our game via Rugby Canada's Board. I am now a rabid fan of the game and cherish all the memories and friendships gained. I have also been able in recent years to express my thanks to several coaches and mentors from the past and regret that I have missed many others who are no longer with us.

What I have Learned About Goldcorp Inc.

I became aware of the agreement with Goldcorp in mid-April 2015 as I tried to decide if I should drive the 400 miles to Victoria to experience the Langford Sevens. I read the article about the sponsorship agreement on Rugby Canada's website and my first reaction was surprise and amazement.

How could the organization that governs our game make such an agreement? Surely Rugby Canada has a set of principles which address such matters and the capability to research the history of potential partners?

My next reaction was anger. Someone in Rugby Canada has made a terrible mistake! This agreement will make Rugby Canada look bad, once the general public becomes aware of Goldcorp's record of human rights abuses.

My third reaction was concern for Rugby Canada and the need to warn the organization about the terrible error that they had made. After re-informing myself about Goldcorp's track record, including reports from academics, NGOs, the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, I set off for Victoria. I found that Goldcorp signs were already up all around the stadium.

At the tournament, and since then, I have verbally contacted several Rugby Canada staff members, so this letter is a follow-up to those initial discussions.

I provide you with this lengthy preamble as an attempt to convince you that I am sending this letter because of my love for this amazing game, and for my life-long respect and support for Rugby Canada, particularly, and amateur sports, in general.

In more recent years I have become involved in issues of human rights, indigenous rights, and environmental protection. Local groups of which I am a member have raised these issues publicly in forums and presentation of documentary films in order to raise awareness and raise funds for those struggling for their communities.

These activities have included learning about the impacts of Canadian mining companies operating overseas, where companies like Goldcorp are operating in repressive, corrupted and impunity-ridden countries, and how people and communities near Goldcorp's operations, like the "San Martin" mine in

Honduras (operating from 2000-2008) and the “Marlin” mine in Guatemala (operating since 2005), have suffered repression, violence, human rights violations, environmental and health harms.

Last year the documentary “Gold Fever” was shown in Williams Lake. I encourage you to watch this film to better understand the history of Goldcorp’s operations in Guatemala. Information about the film is copied below. I include also links to another film – “All That Glitters Is Not Gold” – about the devastating health harms and community divisions created by Goldcorp’s mining operation in Honduras.

Some of the impacts of Goldcorp’s operations that have been documented in Honduras and Guatemala include (with references available upon request):

- Lack of consultation or consent from local indigenous communities affected by the mines
- Manipulation and lack of transparency during land acquisition
- Increasing social and family division and violence amidst societies that have still yet to recover from the trauma of the U.S.-backed dictatorships from the 1960s-1990s
- Deforestation
- Air contamination
- Depletion and contamination of surface and groundwater sources
- Damaged homes from the above and underground blasting
- Human health impacts including skin rashes, hair loss, heavy metal contamination in the blood and other harms
- Repression including shootings and killings against organizers who protest the mining related harms
- Criminalization by Goldcorp of these organizers

These impacts should not be surprising given that Honduras and Guatemala do not have a functioning rule of law, or the ability to meaningfully regulate and protect its own citizens from industrial operations like an open-pit mine. Even more pertinent is the fact that these countries are known to have the highest murder and violence rates in the Americas, high levels of corruption and impunity including a non-functioning legal and justice system, and no remedy or recourse (legal or political) for communities and people who suffer at the hands of foreign multinationals like Goldcorp.

All of this is easy to be ignorant of in Canada, where the profits from such operations return, and where the company is in a position to provide sponsorships and donations without a discussion of how those profits were garnered.

Due Diligence?

Perhaps the general public is not sufficiently aware of this track record, but regardless it raises the question of due diligence that Rugby Canada undertook prior to signing the agreement.

None of these issues are simple, but I hope that this letter begins a process of re-examining whether Rugby Canada should be accepting such a sponsorship, and of learning more about the impacts of Goldcorp’s operations. There are opportunities for Rugby Canada to travel to Guatemala and Honduras, independently of Goldcorp, to learn more about these issues. I encourage you to follow-up with me to discuss those potential opportunities.

Questions for Rugby Canada

How were the principles of fair play, fellowship, keeping the game clean and respect considered prior to this agreement? How do they fit in to how Rugby Canada makes decisions about how it chooses partners? Surely Rugby Canada has a set of principles and policies that addresses such matters, and has the capability to do the research on potential partners. Did this occur prior to the agreement with Goldcorp?

Will the Board be willing to debate these issues and to hear from negatively impacted community members and organizations so that you better understand these issues?

Will Rugby Canada consider sending staff and/or Board Members on an educational fact-finding trip to Honduras and Guatemala to visit with Goldcorp harmed communities and families?

One of the greatest things about rugby is the principled way that the game is played: the commitment to fair play, to keep the game clean, and the fellowship shown every game through handshakes and hugs. Based on its track record, Goldcorp does not represent those same principles.

It is my hope that this letter is shared and discussed with the entire Board, and that it leads to a healthy discussion about whether and how the principles that make our game great are also applied to the sponsors who we want to share the game with.

For the love of the game,

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cc. Rugby Canada Board of Directors

Gold Fever

This award-winning film by Northland Films documents how Goldcorp continues to mine relentlessly in San Miguel Ixtahuacan and Sipacapa, Guatemala, despite 10 years of repression, human rights violations, environmental destruction, and endemic corruption and impunity. Gold Fever takes the viewer into the homes and communities of the courageous Mayan Mam people resisting the harms and violations, struggling for justice and a different "development" model. Trailer/Information:

www.goldfevermovie.com/

All That Glitters Isn't Gold: A Story Of Exploitation And Resistance

This film by Steven Schnoor documents the lives of people residing near Goldcorp's open-pit/ mountain-top removal, cyanide-leaching gold mine in Honduras' Siria valley, and the devastating health harms and other violations they have suffered. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tmqXc5rX8s> (Full film available on youtube.)

Tax-Deductible Donations

To support Goldcorp mining harmed communities in Honduras and Guatemala, struggling FOR community-controlled development, human rights and the environment, struggling AGAINST the

impunity and corruption of global mining companies and their governments, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- United States: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8
- Credit-Card Donations (Canada & U.S.): <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>
- To donate stock, contact: info@rightsaction.org

Delegation to Honduras, November 7-15, 2015 (including visits to Goldcorp harmed communities)

Rights Action and the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College invite you to join this educational seminar trip to Honduras - "Connecting the Dots from the Global to the Local: Understanding the Environmental, Human Rights, Poverty and Impunity Crisis in Honduras"

- Flyer: <http://rightsaction.org/action-content/honduras-education-seminar-trip>
- More info: info@rightsaction.org

More Information

Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

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