

Treatment of Employees

The abuse of power and mistreatment of employees continually escalates the retention of good trained and experienced employees at Fording River. Employees are leaving because of the abuse of power and the conditions of employment on the mine-site. We recently had a Maintenance Foreman on the Shovel Crew call his worker's stupid and dumb. Some foreman will never understand that management by terrorism does not breed lasting loyalty,



I'm glad to report that many companies outside of TECK are now going out of their way to hang on to their top talent. Keeping employees happy, motivated, and on the payroll is one of the key concerns to businesses these days, especially since surveys show that turnover among workers has doubled in the last couple of years.

This means that it's an open market for top talent. A good employee can walk out your door today and have a better job tomorrow. Which brings up a very important question: what can this Company do to keep that person from even thinking about going to work elsewhere? Gone are the days when the weekly paycheck and two weeks vacation a year were enough to keep employees happy. It seems that this Company just doesn't care, or they just don't get it. I continually hear, "If you don't like it leave. Recently one employee told his foreman that he was quitting and as a courtesy was giving 3 weeks notice, the foreman was not happy and told the employee " you can be done today if you want, the employee took the foreman up on his suggestion and left the next day.

Titles don't confer intelligence, just authority. A young engineer who had worked as a staff assistant to an arrogant, supercilious but very effective, division vice president was promoted to a management position. Arriving at the new location, instead of meeting with the employees to determine their knowledge, experience, and potential, he called a general meeting.

The young engineer made the mistake of benchmarking the vice president's style, and made it clear to them who was going to be the boss. He informed them of the mistakes he had uncovered, and pointed out what he called "slip shod" work habits of the group. He then threatened that anyone who he discovered making mistakes would be fired. "If you want to hold on to your jobs, you'd better shape up and soon" he said. Actually, the people who now reported to him were good experienced employees who knew far more about the business than the young engineer; they just didn't fit the headquarters mold. His cavalier approach demoralized the group; they felt they had been pre-judged unfairly by someone who really didn't know them and had no basis for his opinions.

Demotivated, some of the employees left for jobs elsewhere, others resolved to do just enough to get by. They no longer felt encouraged to excel. A serious slump in quantity and quality of results followed. As the slump continued, the engineer felt even more justified in his original opinion and expressed his feelings to the division Vice-President.

The vice president might have been arrogant, but he was experienced enough to know better. The young engineer was astounded when the vice-president told him to quit blaming others, and to "shape up or ship out" Unfortunately, it was too late. The damage was done. Morale slumped just as much as the business did.

Almost in a panic, the young engineer tried to win the people back by "being nice." He didn't have the trust or the respect of the employees; they didn't believe his words but judged rather on his behavior. As it always does, word got around and eventually got back to the vice president. On a Monday morning, the young engineer was fired.

Smart leaders understand that experienced employees usually know what works and what doesn't. Bosses can avoid a lot of dumb mistakes just by getting input from employees who have been around for a while.



My Opinion

I started in the mining industry in January 1978 and had worked for half a dozen mining companies until joining FRO in Aug. 1995. Previous to FRO, I worked in a hard rock underground setting, I saw my share of tragedy, was often humbled, worked hard and played hard. In those days if you screwed up you fussed up, companies liked honesty and often rewarded it. You made sure no one else was blamed for something you had done wrong. There was no humiliation or degradation involved, you were not belittled, talked down to or found guilty until proven innocent. We were treated like adults not children and were allowed to keep our pride and dignity.

Well most of that changed on Mar.4, 2013 when I was subjected to a random drug and alcohol test at FRO. I knew eventually my number would be drawn randomly Ha Ha and had resigned myself to that fact. Since I had nothing to be concerned about, I thought I would be fine with it. Well apparently I am not fine with it at all. Besides feeling violated, I am very disappointed, since it appears the company feels I have a drug or alcohol problem as I was tested without incident or reason. When I asked for Union representation I was denied and told the company doesn't consider it disciplinary. I'm sure it would have been very disciplinary had my test results been positive instead of negative.

I felt shamed and humiliated by the entire ordeal and asked what would happen if I refused the test. To make a long story short, management would have me escorted off the property. Kind of pisses me off to no end that I had done nothing wrong, even in a court of law you are innocent until proven guilty. Sadly it appears big corporations in Canada are beginning to have more clout than our courts. It seems the company thrives on knowing what a morale buster this entire ordeal is. It's as if they get their management style from some turn of the century sweat shop.

After complying, against my wishes, and under duress, I left First Aid knowing had I even been ten years younger, I likely would have quit on the spot. I would also use the copies of my results in my next job application the next day. It is such a blow to my pride and dignity that the disappointment is almost over whelming.

How does someone, in good conscience, continue to work for a company that thinks so little of them? With the amount of other work available elsewhere, I'm sure many operate without such pompous arrogance or such little regard for their employees. I for one will be beginning my search immediately.

Retirement Planning Option

An employee who is eligible for Unreduced Early Retirement and is at least 60 years of age may, entirely at his own option, elect to apply for Early Retirement Leave.

Early Retirement Leave is designed to provide employees with an opportunity to assess retirement conditions before actual retirement. However, no restrictions are placed on the manner in which this option is utilized. Early Retirement Leave will be available to eligible employees during the period October 1 to the following April 30, provided that application is made prior to the preceding July 1st.

The length of leave available will depend on the employee's age as follows:

<i>AGE</i>	<i>DURATION</i>
60	4 weeks
61	4 or 8 weeks
62	4, 8 or 12 weeks
63	4, 8, 12, 16 or 20 weeks
64	4, 8, 12, 16, 20 or 24 weeks

Remuneration during Early Retirement Leave will be equal to the benefits which would have been available if the employee had retired on July 1st preceding the leave. Time on Early Retirement Leave will be included in Credited Service under the Plan.



January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012 at Fording River

27 – Employees Retired

66 – Full Time Employees Quit

22 - Casuals Quit

Taking Early CPP

For those 60 years and older who have chosen to continue working, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) has changed its rules in qualifying for CPP benefits. Previously to qualify for CPP Benefits between the ages of 60-65, you had to either stop working before your CPP retirement pension began or have earning less than the monthly max of the CPP benefit.

Under the new rules that took effect in 2012, you can start receiving your CPP benefits at age 60 without any requirement to stop working or reduce your monthly earnings. In addition, if you are under age 65, both you and your employer will continue to contribute to the CPP which in return will result in you receiving more pension credits and a larger pension amount.

Between the ages of 65 and 70 if still working, contributions to the Plan are optional. The downside of all this is that pensions will now be reduced by 7.2% for each year you begin collecting CPP before the age 65 (up from the previous 6%.) These changes will gradually be introduced from 2012 to 2016. They will give you more options so that you can make decisions that are right for you as you make the transition from work to retirement.

Changes starting in 2012 - Taking early CPP

Year of retirement	% (monthly reduction)
2012	0.52
2013	0.54
2014	0.56
2015	0.58
2016	0.60

For a person who applies for and receives their CPP retirement pension at age 60, this represents a maximum reduction of

2012, - 31.2% - 2015- 34.8%

2013, - 32.4% - 2016- 36%

2014 - 33.6%

LIBERAL POLICIES AT THE HEART OF BC'S ECONOMIC WOES

Over five years after the official onset of the Great Recession, British Columbia's economy remains in desperate shape. This is an important message for citizens when they vote on May 14. Christy Clark's government will claim that its poor economic record is the result of hard times. But many of our economic problems are the direct result of policies followed and promoted by the BC Liberals. And many were already apparent before the recession.

Job Creation Ceases

Let's start with employment and unemployment. Despite Clark's heavily advertised BC Jobs' Plan, launched in September 2011, job creation has virtually ceased.

BC's average monthly employment between January 2012 and January 2013 was 2.259 million. Compared to the average for the preceding 12 months, 7100 jobs were added – but there were actually nearly 2300 fewer people working than in the last pre-recession year, 2008, when the average was 2.266 million. The situation was even worse in the relatively high-paying goods-producing sector of the economy: those industries lost 31,800 jobs from 2008 through 2012.

The other side of the employment-creation coin is unemployment. The average monthly unemployment rate in the 12 months to January 2013 was 6.9 percent, down from 7.4 percent in the previous 12 months. That was the same as 2011's average rate of 7.4 percent, hardly better than the rate of 7.5 percent in 2010 or 2009's 7.7 percent. And it's still a long way from the pre-recession rates of 4.6 in 2008 or 4.3 in 2007. In January, there were actually 11,800 more people unemployed in BC then when Christy Clark announced her jobs plan in September 2011.

The peak of unemployment in the Great Recession was in 2009 when average joblessness hit 184,700. For the 12 months between January 2012 and January 2013 the monthly average was 166,900. That means that since the depths of the recession, BC employers have reduced unemployment by 17,800 by comparison, 2008's monthly average was just 109,900 people without jobs. In other words, we have a very long way to go just to reach pre-recession levels.

Perhaps the desperate state of BC's jobs market can best be seen when we compare employment growth to the growth of the province's working-age population. While BC has effectively lost 2300 jobs since 2008, the working-age population has grown by almost exactly 100,000, according to information from BC Statistics.

Time off Work for Voting – May 14th

Section 74 of the Election Act establishes that any employee who is entitled to vote is entitled to have four consecutive hours free from employment during voting hours on General Voting Day for the purpose of voting. Voting hours on General Voting Day are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Pacific time.

This does not necessarily mean four hours off from work. It means that there must be a four hour period of no work during the time the voting places are open. It is up to the employer to decide when their employees can take time off work to vote. Time off may be at the beginning or end of an employee's shift, or unnecessary if normal working hours already provide the necessary time free from employment. For example, if a shift ends at 4 p.m., or does not begin until noon, the employee is not entitled to any time off.

It is an offence for an employer to take any deduction from an employee's pay, or exact any other penalty, for time off for voting. The employee is entitled to their regular compensation for those hours not worked while voting.

Election Day is May 14th and the polls are open from 8am – 8pm

Shifts working on May 14th are:

- ***5x2 Steady days 7am – 3pm – would get no time off as they would have the required 4 hours free from work to vote***
- ***G- Shift 4x4 & I – Shift 4x4 Steady days – would get 4 hours free from work during the shift to vote.***
- ***You must be a B.C. Resident to be eligible***

Failure to comply

Failure to comply with section 74 is an offence and, upon conviction, an employer may be liable to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for a term not longer than 1 year, or both. Contraventions of the Act should be reported in writing to the Chief Electoral Officer.



This Article is Endorsed by the United Steelworkers

Hi my name is Norma Blissett and I am the NDP candidate for Kootenay East.

I've lived in Cranbrook for the past 18 years and have had the benefit of raising three children in this community. I've always wanted to make a difference. That's why I went in to forestry and worked as a registered professional forester for a number of years. That's why I went in to teaching and have taught math, science and forestry at Mount Baker Secondary School and that's why I have entered politics. I've seen through my involvement in various community groups that individuals can make a difference and in fact we must.

On the doorstep, over the phone and at events I am speaking with voters of all ages. They are looking for a change in government and a change in MLA. After 12 years of Liberal government mismanagement it's time for a change. It's time for a new government with new and better priorities. It's time for a government that will grow a sustainable economy and create jobs. Adrian Dix and the BC NDP will invest in education and skills training, reduce inequality and improve healthcare. These are provincial priorities and these are East Kootenay priorities.

British Columbia has incredible advantages- our natural environment, our strategic access to key markets and our extraordinary diversity both in the land and in our people. But we also face big challenges- abuse of the temporary foreign worker program, growing inequality, threats to our environment and cynicism about government.

After 12 years the BC Liberals are not up to the challenges that face BC today. They've lost their focus. They have made life less affordable for families and they don't have a clear plan. All they offer in this election are partisan games and personal attacks. We can do better. British Columbians deserve better.

Adrian Dix and the NDP are offering a positive, new approach to change the way we engage in politics, to make it more positive and less personal. Personal attacks do nothing to solve problems and only set a bad example for our youth.

Government can't do everything, but it must get the fundamentals right. Our number one priority is education and skills training. With 80% of BC's new jobs requiring a post- secondary credential, access to education and skills training is key to growing a sustainable economy.

We will reinvest in our forests. The British Columbia economy has always relied on our natural resources. We need to manage our resources for the benefit of present and future generations. That means investing in reforestation and silviculture, and making sure that our people can obtain the good paying jobs that result from our resource economy.

I won't describe our entire platform here, but I will say that we will tell you what we are going to do and how we are going to pay for it. There won't be any HST-like surprises once we're elected.

That's our commitment. That's our focus. Practical changes that will make a real difference in peoples' lives – like improving education and skills training, reinvesting in the land and our forests and making sure that BC Resources create BC Jobs. A clear plan that shows exactly what we will do and how we will pay for it.

Thank you very much for your time. I hope that you will support me in saying yes to change for Kootenay East - Change for the Better - One Practical Step at a Time.

Courageous Safety Leadership

Epic Failure

Apple.

In days past this word was used by all to describe and name a certain tree born food. Whether red or green, shiny or bruised; everyone had associated 'Apple' with a type of crispy fruit.

Today the word 'Apple' means more. It means computers, it means innovation, and it means quality. In the past few decades this computer-manufacturing company has changed the way the entire world communicates. We can now observe Apple actually creating our culture in whatever way their management team sees fit. Take the iPod, iPad, and iPhone for instance.

Is this because Apple is the only computer company selling electronic devices? Certainly not. What about Microsoft, Dell, and Gateway? They all sell quality devices that will do jobs similar to Apple products. However, can you imagine going into a store and buying a Dell MP3 player or a Gateway smart phone? Not likely.

If all these options are available to the consumer why does Apple stand out? Very simple. Most large companies tell us all about their grand plans. They tell us all the great ways they are going to improve our lives. They tell us all about how great their products are. Then they ask us "please buy into what we are saying..." Apple does not do this. Instead of telling people of their plans and trying to convince everyone to believe in them and their products, Apple has taken a different approach.

Every Apple employee, from the salesman to the CEO, trusts in what they are doing and selling. Every person has "Bought In". Apple's strategy is not to work hard to convince people to trust them, but to instead, consistently provide actions that cause people to trust them.

*By letting their actions first and products second, consistently speak to the integrity of the company, Apple has been quite successful in creating a global trust. Compare this proven and successful 'quest' for trust to Teck's safety program. **"Courageous Safety Leadership"***

For years now, all TECK employees have been force-fed a steady CSL diet. The concept is actually quite good in theory. Create a workplace culture that encourages workers and managers alike to make an entire core value change. Shift everyone's core principles from 'risk taking' to 'risk elimination'. A great plan. However; from my vantage point most people at Fording River who have experience with CSL, will tell you that they don't believe in this plan. This is not because it won't work, or because it's too hard.

A large majority just are not "Buying In". TECK has made a valiant effort through time spent and heaps of money to make us all believe in their message. Part of the CSL 'message' is to discuss and reform preset beliefs on health and safety. To me this is the fundamental flaw. You can't make anyone BELIEVE in what you are saying if you don't believe it yourself.

The cliché phrase used in one CSL presentation... "Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying..." Is exactly why this message is not succeeding. We do not need a plan or program; we do not need slogans and lectures about how safety is so important to you and TECK...

What we need is consistent actions. CSL has been extremely effective in achieving one thing. Very visibly TECK has spouted its 'message' for safety and very visibly contradicted that message nearly every day at Fording River. The integrity behind this message is just not there. All too often we witness some supervisors and middle managers acting in a manner that is completely inconsistent with the CSL message.

The actions observed day to day do not line-up with the words. Either there is a disconnect from upper management to front-line supervision on the CSL message, or behind closed doors there is a different plan being discussed.

To those in supervisory roles that are actually lining up their actions with their words, I applaud and thank you for your integrity. Unfortunately, to date, you are the exception not the rule.

To TECK I would ask, "Why reinvent the wheel?" Apple has provided a great model in integrity. PEOPLE trust them. Follow that plan. That is unless, of course, TECK doesn't actually BELIEVE in what it is selling.

Temporary Foreign Workers

A \$1.3-million settlement has been reached in a class-action lawsuit brought by a group of 77 temporary foreign workers against the company that owns Denny's restaurants in B.C. Under the terms of the settlement with Northland Properties Corp., workers will be reimbursed for loss of hours, overtime and airfare. Some workers who were forced to pay employment agencies an average of \$6,000 for their jobs will be eligible for compensation. Denny's will pay the legal fees of the workers and the cost of administering the settlement. As well, Denny's will pay \$80,000 to two charities: Migrante BC, which helps Filipino migrants and immigrants, and an as-yet-undetermined children's charity.

Temporary foreign workers filed their claim more than two years ago in B.C. Supreme Court. The settlement is the first ever reached in Canada between temporary foreign workers and an employer under the federal Temporary Foreign Worker program. The program has allowed for foreign workers in a number of fields, ranging from skilled trades and nursing to fast food restaurants and ski hills. "What it means potentially for other foreign workers is that they could act as a group to seek to enforce the terms of any contract they have in Canada, it puts employers on notice that if they do take advantage of foreign workers, they face legal consequences. Many of the 77 workers in the lawsuit are still in B.C. They are mainly from the Philippines, but also Mexico and India. Bobby Naicker, Denny's president, said in a news release that "we have always maintained that our foreign workers would be fully paid for the valuable work they provide, and this settlement accomplishes that objective. "Our foreign worker recruitment program has been reviewed to ensure that the same accounting errors are not repeated in the future."

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, said his organization supported the workers in their class-action suit, but added that it was a "disgrace that workers have to go to this extreme to get their rights. It shows that the whole of the temporary foreign worker program is broken." Sinclair said being able to take an employer to court is not a strategy that works for everyone. He said B.C. has no protection for temporary foreign workers — even though there are more here per capita than any other province. "This is about Denny's using cheap labour," he said. "They got caught. "There are cases like this all over the place. You really can't say there is a shortage of labour — there's a wage shortage. If you're good enough to work here, you're good enough to live here." The temporary foreign worker program began in 1966 with farm workers and expanded in 1981 to include live-in caregivers. The numbers have increased from 122,800 eight years ago to 190,842 in 2011. B.C. is home to 24.3 per cent of the total number of temporary foreign workers in Canada, even though B.C.'s share of the national population is only 13%. .

Conservatives Not Serious About Temporary Foreign Worker Fix

"We have seen first-hand that this government has no interest in meaningful consultation and a full, transparent review of this program," says Ken Neumann. The federal Conservative government is showing it is not serious about fixing the discredited Temporary Foreign Worker Program, the United Steelworkers (USW) says.

"It has been four months since the Conservatives promised a review of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program due to public outrage over abuses associated with the program," said USW Canadian Director Ken Neumann.

"It is becoming increasingly clear that the Conservatives' promise was little more than a cynical attempt at damage control," Neumann said. "We have seen first-hand that this government has no interest in meaningful consultation and a full, transparent review of this program."

The Steelworkers union has publicly exposed major problems with the federal program, including the Conservatives' consent to the HD Mining Company to hire temporary foreign workers for British Columbia mining jobs.

The scandal prompted Human Resources Minister Diane Finley to acknowledge "problems" with the program and to announce a review last November. After seeing no concrete action from the Conservative government for months, the Steelworkers and other concerned stakeholders received a short-notice invitation to a "consultation" meeting on Feb. 27 in Ottawa.

Finley and Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney attended the brief meeting, but "they did not allow meaningful opportunity to present evidence and submissions on this important issue," said Neumann. "We were very disappointed in the way the process worked. It looks to us like the government wants to say it 'consulted' with unions and others, without giving stakeholders a real opportunity to be heard," he added. "We hoped to discuss the very issues that Minister Finley said she was concerned about in November, including how HD Mining got permission to hire temporary foreign workers when there are qualified miners out of work in B.C. who could have been hired," said Neumann. "But their process did not allow for that. "We're concerned this so-called review is turning out to be a sham."

Steelworkers and other worker representatives at the meeting said the government should scrap the existing program and support employers to hire and train workers within the existing labour market. "At a time when many young people and aboriginal Canadians are out of work or are employed in low-skill, low-paying jobs, it is shameful that this government is allowing employers in Canada to hire foreign workers under this program," Neumann said.

[Teck Coal Facing Serious Water Pollution in Elk Valley](#)

Studies show Selenium Leaching out of Mine Sites,

Contaminating Eggs of Fish, Frogs, Birds

Teck Coal Ltd. is facing a massive pollution problem in the Elk Valley, where a metal-like element known as selenium is leaching out of mine sites and collecting in the eggs of fish, frogs and water birds. Environment Canada has had investigators in the area in southeastern British Columbia collecting samples at mine sites, but Todd Gerhart, a Department of Justice prosecutor, refused to comment on Thursday when asked if charges are being contemplated.

A spokesman for Teck Resources Ltd., the parent company of Teck Coal, referred questions on the investigation to Environment Canada. Environment Canada was unable to find a spokesman to comment on Wednesday and Thursday.

At high levels, selenium can cause embryonic deformities in fish eggs, leading to sudden population collapse. That threshold hasn't been reached in the valley, where trout populations appear to be stable. But with selenium levels creeping up in the Elk and Fording rivers, concerns are growing about the environmental impact from a century of coal mining.

"Selenium has significant impact on the reproductive organs, that's why there is a risk of population collapse," said John Bergenske, a spokesman for the environmental group Wildsight, which is calling for a moratorium on coal development in the Rocky Mountain watershed near Fernie.

Mr. Bergenske said selenium pollution has been a concern in the area for years, but the issue came into sharp focus this week when a University of Montana study showed selenium levels are 100 times higher in the Elk River than in the nearby Flathead River, which is in a watershed not touched by coal mining.

Teck responded to questions about selenium pollution with a brief statement saying the company plans to spend \$600-million over the next five years on water quality projects. The company also released a selenium action plan it presented to the B.C. government in February. But Teck's plan aims for selenium levels that do not meet B.C.'s water quality guidelines.

The province has set the acceptable level of selenium in water at two micrograms per litre. Teck's action plan proposes "environmental management levels" of 43 micrograms per litre in the Fording River and 17 micrograms per litre in the Elk River. The B.C. standard of two micrograms per litre will be met only in Lake Koochanusa, far downstream from Teck's five Elk Valley mines.

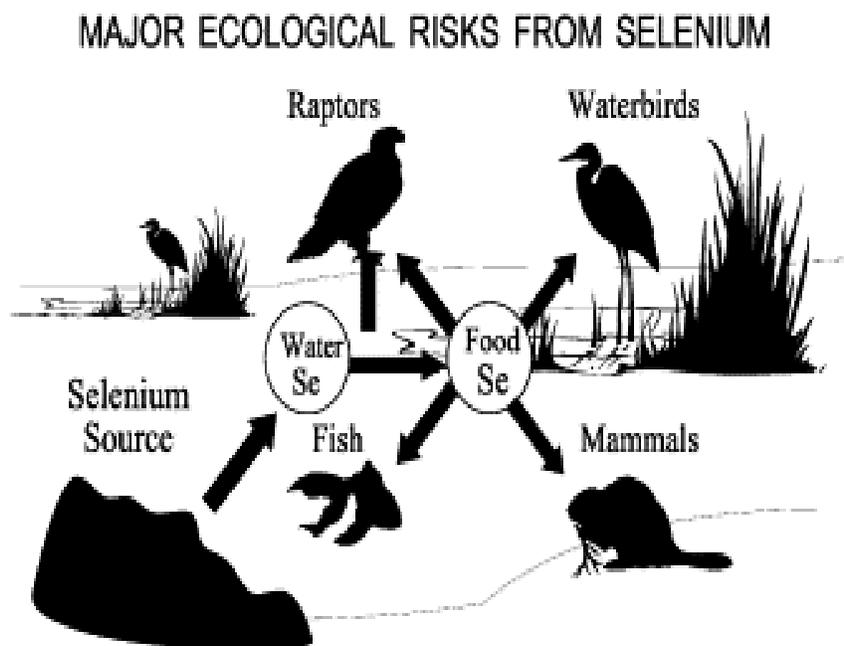
Chris Stannell, a spokesman for Teck, said in an e-mail the targets for the Fording and Elk rivers "are set at levels that will protect fish in flowing streams, which are much less sensitive to selenium than lake environments." "It just doesn't go far enough," Sarah Cox, interim director of Sierra Club B.C., said of Teck's plan. "It is proposing selenium levels . . . that in U.S. would be illegal."

B.C. Environment Minister Terry Lake said Teck is clearly trying to get the problem under control and is striving to bring selenium levels down throughout the valley. He said it makes more sense for the government to work with Teck and keep the mines viable while searching for solutions, rather than closing operations.

"We have to be reasonable," he said. "If we were to shut down mining there today we'd have [continuing pollution] problems for hundreds of years."

The company acknowledges in its action plan that "concentrations of selenium have been increasing in the Elk Valley in the rivers and streams that are downstream of Teck's mining operations." It states that since the mid-1990s, selenium levels in the Elk River have increased from estimated historical background levels of one microgram per litre to 18 micrograms per litre, and that in some areas, it has climbed to 57 micrograms per litre.

U.S. studies have shown that selenium levels above four micrograms per litre in water can lead to dangerous concentrations in the eggs of fish. Selenium is a natural element that washes out of waste rock. It moves up through the food web, becoming increasingly concentrated in animals. Studies in the Elk Valley have found selenium in the eggs of cutthroat trout, frogs and red-winged blackbirds.



“SKILLS” SHORTAGE OR “JOBS” AND “TRAINING” SHORTAGE?

According to Statistics Canada, in September 2012 over 825,000 Canadians were seeking work. Across Canada, there were 5800 unemployed forestry and logging-sector workers, 10,800 unemployed in mining, quarrying and oil and gas, 80,600 unemployed construction workers and 95,400 unemployed manufacturing-sector employees.

That same month, adds Stats Can, there were just 267,000 job vacancies among Canadian businesses. And while that was up 19,000 from 12 months earlier, for every job vacancy, there were still 5.3 unemployed people, down from 5.7 in September 2011. This appears to speak more to a “jobs shortage” than a “skills shortage”.

That’s certainly the view of many industrial relations specialists. “While there are definitely shortages of skilled people in certain fields and geographic regions (skilled trades and the Alberta oil patch spring to mind), I seriously question whether there really is a major skills shortage in Canada,” says Brian Kreissl, managing editor of Consult Carswell, an online resource for HR professionals, for instance. “When people say there’s a skills shortage,” he adds, “they often really mean they can’t find people who have done the exact same job in the exact same industry, have the exact qualifications they’re looking for and are willing to work for the salary they’re willing to pay.” In fact, a big part of the reason for “skills shortages” in Canada is the failure of employers to train workers or of governments to ensure training programs.

As Globe and Mail reporter Barrie McKenna wrote in a Dec. 19 2012 article, perhaps “the core of the problem lies with Corporate Canada. Many of the same companies who complain of labour shortages invest too little training their own workers. “Apprenticeship – the time-honoured tradition of experienced journeymen training the next generation – remains a foreign concept for the vast majority of employers.

In spite of generous government incentives, more than 80 per cent of employers who use skilled workers don’t offer any, according to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. Spokeswoman Marie Bilodeau said the reasons are numerous, and complex. Among other things, companies – particularly smaller ones – say they lack the human, financial and logistical resources to train their own people.”

A 2010 study by Miner Management Consultants supports this view: it indicates that Canadian firms spent only 1.5 percent of their payroll on training compared to the US average of 2.25 percent. And only 18 percent of employers in industries that require skilled trades are currently hiring apprentices, says the CAF. Nonetheless, notes McKenna, training does pay off: “Research by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, which lost its federal financing this year, shows that companies get back \$1.47 for every \$1 they spend on apprentices. Over the life of a four-year apprenticeship, the gain can reach as high as \$250,000 for a single heavy equipment mechanic as the apprentice becomes more productive and generates revenue.” An earlier US study produced similar results and even suggests that the more companies spend on training, the better they perform financially.

That’s increasingly not what happens here in Canada. In the recent well publicized case of Chinese-owned mining companies that said they need to import temporary foreign workers from China to dig coal in BC, it was the provincial government that was lax: although the BC government knew of the firms’ plans to use imported workers as long ago as 2006, no one thought to negotiate local employment targets or arrange training courses for British Columbians. And it turns out BC is just one province among several that has actually cut apprenticeships and other training budgets in recent years; the province’s industrial training authority’s budget was slated to be cut by 9 percent or \$9.45 million between 2011/12 and 2014/15, reducing the budget from \$105.5 million to \$94.45 million. This didn’t stop BC’s jobs minister from supporting the firms’ calls for temporary foreign workers however; Pat Bell said the firm searched for qualified Canadians but “came up empty-handed”, even though it actually turned out the firms had received 315 applications from Canadians – many of them highly qualified – even though they required job-seekers to speak Mandarin and according to ads and court documents, offered wages below the going rate in BC.

Another problem is that many who do apprentice wind up not completing their programs, largely it seems because of lack of support from employers, communities, the education system or government. A 2010 Stats Can report says only 51 per cent of apprentices who registered in 1995 had completed their training by 2005. Another Stats Can study says the number of apprentices in Canada increased by 120 per cent from 1995 to 2007, but the percentage of the total apprentices completing their training in each year decreased from 10.5 per cent in 1995 to 6.8 per cent in 2007. Apprentices have higher completion rates when they have support mechanisms; that’s one reason union members have better completion outcomes.

All told, this sounds more like a “training shortage” than a “skills shortage”. Yet there is little evidence of a massive looming skills shortage in any event. Looking ahead to 2012, a recent HRSDC report projects “no major imbalances by skill level...over the next ten years.” In all the major working-class occupational categories – those requiring post-secondary education or apprentice training, those requiring high-school education and those requiring only on-the-job training, labour-market demand and supply are expected to be roughly in balance in the coming decade. Employment growth and the number of trainees available are likely to cover one another off, in other words.

For jobs requiring PS or apprenticeships, openings are expected to be 34.3 percent of the total of existing jobs while entrants are expected to total 32.0 percent. For those requiring high-school education the relative rates are 24.9 percent and 27.0 percent while for those where on-the-job training will suffice the rates are 8.6 percent and 7.5 percent. The study does project some shortages. In “occupations unique to primary industry” for example, it suggests there will be shortages of: “Supervisors Logging and Forestry (NOC821), Supervisors, Mining, Oil and Gas (NOC 822), Contractors, Operators and Supervisors in Agriculture, Horticulture and Aquaculture (NOC 825).” By contrast, over 20 industrial jobs are expected to be in surplus, including machinists, metal-trades workers, heavy equipment operators, transport equipment operators, trades helpers and labourers, several sorts of machine operators and others.

All told, while many federal ministers are repeating the “skills shortage” story, the federal Government’s own labour market analysts actually expect a significant surplus of workers in all three working-class job categories, that is those where applicants require college or apprenticeship training, high-school educations or on-the-job training.

Yet we continue to hear industry and corporate spokespeople claim they face a “looming skills shortage”. Recently we’re hearing it from representatives of BC’s forest industry, for instance, even though some 35,000 industry workers lost their jobs in the past decade; surely they didn’t all leave BC, retire, expire or disappear?

Sadly, past experience is that such claims usually precede efforts to import workers from offshore. Having failed to train Canadians in the past decade and still unwilling to train them or unwilling or unable to pay prevailing wage rates, many instead turn their eyes offshore. Many employers have shown particular enthusiasm recently for temporary foreign workers.

The federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program and other programs that allow firms to import workers from offshore at lower-than-market wages in Canada now covers nearly half a million workers. According to an article in the Globe and Mail in November 2012, “At any given moment, there are 300,000 to 450,000 temporary foreign workers in Canada in fields as diverse as agriculture, the service industry and high technology.” And the number has grown rapidly in spite of the ongoing recession that has driven up domestic unemployment rates.

If there is no real skills shortage, then perhaps Brian Keissl is right: what these employers really want is people who will work for less than the current workforce is willing to accept. Again, that seems to have been the case with respect to the Chinese coal miners in BC and indeed, for a considerable number of the 300,000 non-agricultural and roughly 150,000 agricultural workers brought to Canada under the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program and other guest-worker programs.

The availability of readily-exploitable workers outside our borders seems like a poor excuse for the federal or provincial governments to allow firms to bring them in instead of training or hiring Canadians. Yet that seems to be exactly what is happening at a rapidly-increasing pace. Having failed to train or creating training programs, companies and governments now see no alternative than to import workers. Surely thousands of Canadian workers would jump at the chance to train for jobs that offer good pay and relatively stable employment.

Surely we should give them the opportunity and start dealing with the “jobs shortage” and the “training shortage” rather than simply accepting the argument that there is a “looming skills shortage”. At the same time, we should fight to ensure that when we really do need workers from offshore that we welcome them as fell-fledged landed immigrants with all the workplace, legal and citizenship rights enjoyed by other Canadians.

We are after all a nation of immigrants; historically nearly all Canadians look back to arriving in Canada or to a parent, grand-parent or ancestor who came here “from far and wide.” The temporary foreign worker program and similar policies points the way to a permanent under-class of temporary, quasi-legal, second-class citizens. Surely most Canadians dread the idea a Canada where exploited second-class citizens sweat and toil while the rest of us either profit, enjoy our leisure – or stay home unemployed or under-employed.

WCB Report

We presently have a number of WCB appeals on the go. Some of these appeals deal with claims being denied because suitable light duties were available, yet when these workers tried to go to work they were sent home.

*If anyone has problems with light duty work, please contact the Union Hall.
-For young and old workers please make sure you have your hearing checked at least once a year. So that if you develop a hearing problem there will be evidence of a work relationship. Hearing aids aren't cheap and can cost thousands of dollars, besides the difficulties that hearing loss brings to a person's life.*

WCB will pay the full cost, ongoing maintenance and replacements if needed, if your claim is allowed. We also want to point out that we have had several successful hearing claims allowed over the years and hearing loss is not confined to specific jobs, so make sure you get your ears tested.

- 1) Make sure you report all injuries immediately.*
- 2) Contact the Union for information and direction.*
- 3) Report your injury to Worksafe, BC.*

Grievance Report

1) Grievance was filed on Company refusing members to take their vacation entitlement and paying them out.

2) We continue to file individual grievances and policy grievances as it relates to the Drug, Alcohol, and Medication Policy. Please provide your statement to the Union if you are selected.

3) Drug, Alcohol and Medication injunctive hearing was on Feb. 18th and will hopefully wrap-up on March 28th, 2013. We are requesting the arbitrator to set aside the policy and stop the random testing, until the full merits are heard.

4) Internet grievances have all been heard and we are presently trying to reach a suitable resolve to these grievances. If not, we will proceed to arbitration.

5) We presently have four termination arbitrations that are scheduled to be heard or are in the scheduling process. Drop into the Hall for more details.

- 6) *We are scheduled to hear an arbitration concerning the Company not giving a member a ride home when he was sick. This will be heard in early May.*
- 7) *We have launched a policy grievance concerning the Company giving a junior employee who is the back-up shifter preference (super seniority) when it comes time to move workers to other shift schedules.*
- 8) *We have filed two Human Rights Complaints and grievances concerning issue's of accommodation due to illness.*

- 9) *We are presently going thru a mediation process in order to return a member to her job following illness.*

- 10) *We have a number of discipline grievances and policy grievances that require scheduling.*

- 11) *In December we had an arbitration concerning the Company giving a member step 4 and a one day suspension for sleeping in. The member was previously on Step 4 and with this new discipline he would be on step 4 for a two year period. The Union was successful on having the step 4 discipline removed.*

- 12) *We are looking at having a Shop Steward School hopefully in the near future. If you are interested please drop off your contact information to the Union Hall or give us a call.*
- 13) *We have filed a grievance seeking damages as it concerns the actions of a Management member during a request for a drug sample. This grievance involved the old policy. Please contact the Union Hall for future information on the above or drop in for a chat.*

Drug, Alcohol, Medication Policy

(The DAM Policy)

As everyone is aware, the Company introduced the DAM Policy in early Dec. 2012. The Union issued a bulletin to its members explaining in part that if an employee refuses to participate as per the DAM Policy they would be placed on "paid medical leave" and sent to an addictions specialist. The Employer immediately put out a bulletin saying that the Union was incorrect and that employees who refuse will be placed on unpaid leave. The Union immediately sought a ruling from the arbitrator and he determined that an employee who refuses will be entitled to paid leave. Shortly thereafter, we had a member refuse and the Company put him on paid medical leave. It was at this time it was identified what "paid medical leave" means in the eyes of the Company in that the Company will pay the equivalent amount of monies one would receive if they were on sickness and accident benefits.

The Union has taken issue with this position and we believe that a member should receive full wages. As such we have requested a further ruling from the arbitrator. We have received reports from members that Management has told them that if a person refuses to participate as per the DAM Policy they will be placed on unpaid leave. We have requested that Teck inform its Management that this is not correct.

The Union is also requesting all members who are or have been randomly selected to provide a statement to the Union. The Company has refused to provide the Union the names of who they are testing and are refusing Union involvement (Shop Steward) when members are required to test.

The Union will be requesting monetary damages for breaching our member's privacy rights. So make sure that you provide a statement to the Union if you are selected. The Union will be proceeding on March 28, 2013 with the arbitration to have the policy set aside until the full case is heard. For better details on our position please contact the Union Hall.

Presently there are two other cases that are ongoing that may have an impact on our dispute. In Alberta, Suncor introduced a Random Alcohol and Drug testing policy in 2012. The Union brought the matter before an arbitrator requesting that the policy be set aside until the full merits of the case were heard. The arbitrator agreed with the Union's position and the policy was set aside. Following this decision Suncor tried to have the arbitrator's decision overturned by the courts. Suncor was not successful. The full merits of the case started in early January, 2013. In discussion with their Union they are hopeful to complete this arbitration some time this year.

The other case involves a Random Alcohol Policy (not Drug) that was introduced at a work site in New Brunswick a number of years ago. This case worked its way all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada and was heard in early December, 2012. The decision on this case will hopefully be released sometime this year. It is unclear at this time whether the Supreme Court will address the legitimacy of Random Drug testing in work sites across Canada.

It is unfortunate that Teck Coal decided not to wait until the above cases were decided before implementing the DAM policy. We will come out with further information once we have completed and received the decision on setting the policy aside. Until then please provide your statement to the Union if you are selected. If anyone has any questions or comments please drop in to the Hall or give us a call.

This form has been introduced by the Company in conjunction with the Drug, Alcohol, and Medication Policy.

Random/Post Incident/Reasonable Cause drug testing for non-negative test resulting from prescription medications

1. Do you have a current prescription for a medication that you are currently taking? (LPO to review prescription and validate)
2. Are you taking the medication as prescribed (i.e. dosage and frequency)?
3. Is this medication affecting your ability to work safely?
4. Do you attest that any result coming from the laboratory should be consistent with how you are reporting taking your medication?

Employee Name: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

LPO Name: _____

Members are requested by Management to fill out this form and sign it, if the employee has a non-negative test resulting from prescription medication.

It is the Union's position that you are not required to fill out this form and that a member may refuse to release any information as it relates to their medication usage.

If there are any questions as to a members medication usage as the result of a positive test, the Drug Testing Lab will contact the member and obtain details on their medication usage. The Drug Testing Lab cannot release this information to the Company and that the only information provided is whether the urine specimen is negative or positive for an illegal drug.

The Union recommends that members should not fill out this form as this information is private to the individuals involved. Further more this form can be used as evidence if there are further inquiries by the Company.

If any members experience problems with the above please contact the Union Hall immediately or call 250-423-1024 or 250-433-2192. **Protect your privacy.**

SHOW YOUR UNION CARD

Show your Union Card to get your discount at the following Businesses.

1. The Cottonwood Tree (Ferne)

- Health Food store
- 10% off products

2. Sparwood Hose & Fitting

- 5% off

3. Intermountain Services

- \$100 off purchase of a seacan
- 10% off rental

4. NAPA

- 10% (applies to all mine employees)

5. Cummins Western Canada

- 5% off

6. BOARDSTIFF - in Fernie, BC

- 10% off

7. Elk River Guiding Company Fernie BC

- 15% off

8. Gear Hub Sports

- 15% off plus a \$20.00 gift card for all 7884 workers for their first visit

9. Corrien's Carpet Cleaning

- about 15% off and no taxes (works out to about \$0.22/sq.ft. Elk Valley and Pass 250-430-7020 or 250-425-9961 for a quote.

10. W.E. Insurance (Home and Auto)

- Call 1-800-663-4200 in BC
- Call 1-877-787-7021 in all other Provinces.
- W.E Tax Services – Call 1-800-845-1181

11. Mark's Work Warehouse – 10% discount card available at Elkford or Sparwood Steelworkers Union Hall

12. The Good Earth Natural Alternatives

- 10% off for vitamins and supplements.

13. Gerick Sports – Cranbrook

- 5% off Regular Price for Hard Goods & 10% off Regular Price for Soft Goods

Shop Stewards

The Union is looking for Shop Stewards on all shifts. We will provide you with the required training, so that you are able to adequately represent your fellow employees on your shift. Please contact the Union Hall so that we can put you on a list. Once a school scheduled we will contact you.

**Visit Your Local Union Website @
USW7884.com**

Membership Meetings

Every third Wednesday of the month at 5pm
12 Water Street Elkford BC

***You Want to Rent the Union Hall
Banquet Room?***

*Call 250-865-2223
\$150.00 for Members
\$300.00 for Non-Members*



The Union has been receiving many complaints at the Union Hall Regarding Sunlife not paying the adequate reimbursement for your negotiated Benefits, especially on eye glasses. Our eye glass benefits were negotiated as follows: We will cover the cost of contact lenses, eyeglasses or laser eye correction surgery and will cover 100% of these costs up to a maximum of: \$150 per person in a benefit year or \$300 per person if no amount was reimbursed for these expenses for the person in the previous benefit year.

*When I put in my reimbursement for glasses this year I deliberately wrote on the bottom of the claim form in legible big print form. **“No claim made for glasses last year and I am entitled to \$300.00 reimbursement this year, please remit \$300.00”**. When I got my automatic deposit, what did I get “yes \$150.00” it took me an hour on the phone to get this straightened out, I was assured by the customer service rep that this was an over-site., I asked them how it got by them when it was written in large bold letters that no claim was made the previous year, they assured me that they would investigate and get back to me. It’s been 2 months now with no response.*

I received several other calls from members with the same complaints, so I called the Benefits Administrator Corrina Anctil and asked her to call Sunlife and get this corrected so that claimants received the proper reimbursement. She assured me that she would, two weeks later I was still receiving complaints and called Corrina and requested that she contact Sunlife again to have this corrected, I also requested that she have an Employee Bulletin posted to inform the employees that this over-site was occurring, and to double check their reimbursement.

Because of the magnitude of the claims that were under paid in a short period of time, I was sure that there were employees out there that never caught the over-site or were unaware of the claim reimbursement. It has been a month now and I have not seen a bulletin, I’m not sure why, maybe they don’t really care if your getting ripped off. So please be aware and double check your benefit plan when putting in claim reimbursements. Be sure that you are receiving your proper benefit claim reimbursement. If you are unsure call the Union Hall. We have all the Benefit Plans on our Web-site at usw7884.com for your convenience.