

A REALITY CHECK FOR PPA

A week ago Pan Pacific Aggregates ran a full-page advertisement in this newspaper, purportedly to inform coast residents about the company and its plans to mine on the Sunshine Coast. That ad was a gross distortion of the facts.

We, the hundreds of members of the undersigned organizations, wish to set the record straight.



Construction Aggregates' loading dock, Sechelt - Edwin Huber photo

By any measure, the Consolidated Aggregates loading dock, shown above, is an eyesore on the Sechelt waterfront. Nonetheless, PPA's ad makes the absurd claim that a similar facility at Wood Bay would actually enhance the tourist industry, attracting "many people who are interested in modern industry." If true, where are the tourists lining up to behold the technological wonders of Con Ag's dock?



Entrance to Wood Bay, Malaspina Strait - Walter Sivucha photo

PPA's ship loading terminal would impose a 150-meter-long dock and freighters the length of two football fields on this tranquil scene at the entrance to Wood Bay. And yet PPA's ad would have us believe that a port here would "not be near any populated area or tourist attraction." This IS the tourist attraction, the unspoiled beauty of Malaspina Strait. More than 70 residences are within earshot of the port.

Fiction and Fact

On the company...

PPA's ad tells us that it is listed on a London stock exchange because "investors are more comfortable, and familiar with, industrial minerals." This will come as news to Canadian investors, but that said, there are more substantive reasons for the company to distance itself from Canadian markets. The AIM exchange is also a long way from the Sunshine Coast, allowing PPA to twist the facts in ways that Canadian investors would be more likely to spot than their counterparts in the UK. An example: Documents accompanying the PPA stock offering describe the Sechelt Carbonate project as "on tidewater." In fact, it is more than 2,000 feet up in the Caren Range and six miles inland. The cost of transporting limestone to Malaspina Strait would be in the millions.

On the conveyor...

PPA's intention is to bridge those six miles with a conveyor belt which would "be raised nearing existing wildlife paths to allow animals and people to pass," according to its advertisement. Huge culverts under the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline were supposed to allow migrating caribou to pass. The herds wouldn't go near the culverts, even though the line is silent, except at widely-spaced pumping stations. A noisy conveyor here would almost certainly be avoided by deer and elk, effectively cutting the western slope of the Sechelt Peninsula in half.

On the environment...

PPA makes much of the "strict environmental protection requirements" under which the mine would operate. In fact, B.C. Environmental Assessment Authority offers very little protection. It has never turned down a project and has no authority to do so. It is limited to recommending measures to mitigate environmental harm. But with open pit mines on the scale of the Sechelt Carbonate project, mitigation becomes largely cosmetic, an attempt to contain the mess and restore the site. The result bears no faintest resemblance to what was there before.

On the economy...

Mines do create jobs and pay taxes, as PPA's ad correctly states. But Sechelt is no longer what the company describes to its UK investors as an "industrial" town. Tourism is now our future, worth \$60 million a year and rising fast. Still, as the company would have it, "tourism will not be adversely affected" because the mine is over the hill and out of sight. Not so. The thunderous, dusty conveyor would pass right under our main highway. And a deep water port would be an ugly blot on Malaspina Strait. The mine itself would completely supplant the growing stream of tourists and residents alike who walk the wetland trails. On balance, proprietors of our many tourist businesses believe we have far more to lose than gain from PPA.



George Lenz photo

Nearly a dozen exquisite lakes, ponds and connecting streams would be utterly obliterated if PPA's Sechelt Carbonate Project went ahead. However, the company's ad assures us there will be "a zero net loss of habitats." Nonsense. No reclamation scheme can ever replace these wetlands. When they are gone, they are gone forever, along with the entire complex of life that depends on them.



Lynne Bogardus photo

These are the lakes and ponds of the future if PPA is allowed to mine. The company's ad claims that "there is no danger of water contamination." Mines all over the province tell us otherwise. Settling ponds cannot be sealed to prevent leeching into ground water. And polluted surface water almost invariably escapes the site.

There is one thing that Pan Pacific Aggregates cannot distort: every local government, including the Sechelt Indian Band, is now opposed to their presence here. Surely the message is clear: the people of the Sunshine Coast neither want nor need another large, dirty, noisy mine in their midst.

ENDORSED BY:

Sunshine Coast Conservation Assn.	Halfmoon Bay Citizens' Assn.
Save Our Sunshine Coast	Friends of Caren Range
Clean Air Society	Sunshine Coast Bed & Breakfast,
Friends of the Sechelt Peninsula	Cottage Owners Assn.

Help Stop PPA - write to Richard Neufeld, Min. Energy and Mines, Box 9060, Stat-Prov-Gov, Victoria, V8W9E2

www.saveoursunshinecoast.com