

People's Health Movement – Canada¹

Statement of solidarity with “Panama Vale Mas Sin Minería”

The People's Health Movement - Canada stands in solidarity with activists from the coalition “Panama is Worth More without Mining” (Panama vale mas sin minería) who have taken to the streets to bravely contest the constitutionality of the Panamanian legislature's October 2023 agreement with First Quantum Minerals Ltd. of Canada, which would allow its subsidiary Minera Cobre Panama to continue operating a huge open-pit copper mine in central Panama for at least 20 more years.

We fully support Panamanian activists who know that extending the life of this open pit mine would be a step backwards for environmental protection in the country and would cause still more environmental harms that have no remediation. The mine also affects human health, which is directly and inextricably linked to water quality, environmental conditions and community stability. The environmental and human costs of extending the contract are unacceptably high. As the movement declares: “Panama is worth more without mining.”

We watched in horror and indignation as the government signed Law 406 that enabled the 20-year concession, and we lauded the efforts of the tens of thousands of citizens, including legal experts, who took to the streets all over Panama raising awareness of the unconstitutionality of the agreement. Now we join the movement in celebrating the Supreme Court of Panama's ruling that the process used to create the agreement with First Quantum was unconstitutional.

Civil society organizations in Panama have already successfully pushed the Panamanian government to declare a moratorium on future mining. However, this moratorium does not include current concessions and permits. PHM-Canada will continue to support the movement in demanding that the Panamanian government extend the moratorium, that it ends its contractual relationship with First Quantum, and that it not re-negotiate it. Panamanians want a Panama free from mining - and we support them.

We have watched the Canadian government be conspicuously silent about the unconstitutionality of the agreement, continuing its shameful and cowardly record of denying

¹ The People's Health Movement is a broad network of health justice activists across the world, guided by the principles of the [People's Charter for Health](#). The PHM is involved in issues as wide-ranging as accessible primary care, the corporatisation of global health agencies and the impact of extractive industries on community health. Around the world regional networks of volunteers and NGOs engage in health activism around these themes and others. We understand health broadly, as inclusive of all life on the planet. We critically understand and recognize that health is largely socially determined, and therefore can be changed.

The work of PHM-Canada involves a small network of volunteers with no central office or staffing, and limited resources for organising. The PHM-Canada *Extractivism and Health* working group (PHMEHWG) is a small group of volunteer members from within the wider network. Inspired by the global PHM [Extractive Industries Working Group: Statement To The 4th Assembly Of The People's Health Movement](#), we practice solidarity with communities around the world that are organized in struggles against the often predatory actions of (mostly Canadian) mining companies, particularly as they affect the health and well-being of people and their environments. Our work incorporates critical (anti-capitalist, anti-oppressive, feminist, eco-socialist, anti-colonial, anti-racist) perspectives and practices respect for Indigenous peoples' knowledge/practices.

responsibility for its promotion of harmful Canadian corporate mining activity in Latin America. By signing bilateral free trade agreements across Latin America – including a 2010 agreement with Panama – the Canadian state has created and bolstered mechanisms by which mining companies expand and consolidate their power. The extractivist model is incongruous with health and development, and we seek its dismantling.

Thus, the People's Health Movement Canada wholly supports the "Panama Worth More without Mining" movement in its current and continuing demands that:

- The Panama legislature should annul the agreement and not re-negotiate a new contract with First Quantum Minerals Ltd.
- The Panama government should expand the moratorium (Ley 1110) on all future concessions and permits for metal mining to include current permits, and it should definitively cancel all mining applications on file.
- The Panamanian government should pass binding legislation to protect the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor by prohibiting all extractivist activities in this delicate ecological corridor.

In line with the demands of the Panamanian people, as expressed in the widespread month long protests, we call on the Canadian government to:

- Require First Quantum Minerals Ltd. to respect the Supreme Court of Panama's ruling of the Minera Cobre Panama mining contract as unconstitutional and cease all efforts to extend the life of the Cobre Panama mine
- Withdraw economic and diplomatic support for First Quantum Minerals Ltd. in line with its 'Enhanced Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy to Strengthen Canada's Extractive Sector Abroad'
- Sanction companies that violate national or international law and/or human rights by ending all financial and diplomatic supports to them.

In line with the demands of the Panamanian people, as expressed in widespread month-long protests, we call on First Quantum Minerals Ltd. to:

- Respect the Supreme Court of Panama's ruling of the mining contract as unconstitutional by ceasing all efforts to extend the life of the Cobre Panama mine
- Compensate the Panamanian workers and enact a full environmental cleanup as Minera Cobre Panama is dismantled and mining ceases.