

Sample Letter to the General Council Executive re Pension Board refusal to respond to the will of the church and divest from Goldcorp

Please send letters to:

General Council Executive

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CC: Mining the Connections

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Dear General Council Executive members,

Respectfully, we ask the General Council Executive, as the Administrator of the United Church Pension Plan, to request the Pension Board to reconsider its decision to reject the GC42 resolution expressing the will of the church that the Pension Board divest of its shares in Goldcorp and make public that divestment. While recognizing that the Pension Board has the legal right to reject the GC42 resolution, we continue to press our concern because the United Church has spoken and because of our faithful understanding of what is required to support our sisters and brothers who have suffered and continue to suffer the devastating impacts of Goldcorp's involvement in three mining projects, the Marlin mine, the Cerro Blanco mine and the Tahoe Resources mine as major shareholder. We also ask this because of the United Church response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including our clear stance regarding free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous communities before and during extractive resource projects. Finally we ask this because we have been called to do so by members of the United Church of Canada from Vancouver Island to Iqaluit to Newfoundland.

The Appendix to the Nov. 2016 Pension Board Report to GCE at no point addresses the content of the resolution seeking divestment from Goldcorp based on United Church social policies and commitments to Partnership and Right Relations, including support for free, prior and informed consent. Nor does it deal with the impacts that management engagement has been unable to address: long term environmental damage, especially water and land contamination; disruption of community cohesion and increased community conflict; destruction of homes and sacred sites; increased domestic violence, family breakdown, alcohol abuse and the sex trade; loss of indigenous languages; increased health problems including HIV/AIDS, skin lesions and child malnutrition due to inflated costs of basic goods. A recent Osgoode Hall Law School [Justice and Accountability Project](#) report details serious human rights violations, including murders, kidnappings, disappearances, injuries and unfounded arrest warrants.

We strongly affirm the United Church's stance supporting free, prior and informed consent and trust that this policy applies beyond Canada's borders. Goldcorp has never sought the free, prior and informed consent of communities affected by mining projects, nor indicated any intention to do so. It has obtained exploration licenses from the Guatemalan government in regions where indigenous communities voted massively against mining projects in municipal referenda. The Appendix notes that Goldcorp's indigenous rights policy is consistent with ILO Convention #169 on indigenous and tribal peoples which requires government-sponsored consultations that respect indigenous decision-making processes. Whatever its policy, consultations have never occurred nor has Goldcorp insisted that consultations take place. In fact Tahoe Resources tried to block consultations and when they did go ahead, Tahoe ignored the results.

The Pension Board states that Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM), the sovereign wealth fund of Norway, has removed Goldcorp from the "under observation" classification. That is only partially true. However, Goldcorp was the major shareholder in Tahoe Resources during the period which led NBIM to divest from Tahoe Resources, along with another

billion-dollar pension fund, the Netherlands' Pensioenfonds. They cite its lack of respect for communities that peacefully and democratically expressed their opposition to its mine and a campaign of persecution through unfounded legal cases, violent incidents and militarization.

Fiduciary duty in no way requires investment in gold, whether with Goldcorp or Barrick. Nor will the floodgates open if the Pension Board divests from Goldcorp. To bring a resolution to General Council requires years of work – communicating with global partners, documentation and education of United Church members. Groups will not present a motion to General Council without a compelling reason to do so.

Divesting from Goldcorp would achieve significant outcomes. It would send a clear message to Goldcorp and the public that the Pension Board is divesting from Goldcorp due to its demonstrated lack of will to ensure free, prior and informed consent. Prophetic moral leadership by the United Church Pension Board would hugely influence individual investors to divest from Goldcorp. Union members see the United Church is a moral beacon. A Pension Board decision to divest would encourage union members to bring pressure to bear on union pension plans which are very significant shareholders in Goldcorp.

It is not too late to divest. We urge you, as GCE members, to ask the Pension Board to act on the General Council resolution.

Yours faithfully,