



October 22, 2014

RE: **Mark Hume's Articles in the Globe and Mail – October 12th and October 19th**

To the Editor of the Globe and Mail:

Elk Valley residents have been aware of and working together with industry and government on the selenium issue for more than twenty years. Mark Hume's articles in the Globe and Mail dated October 12th and 19th creates an impression that this problem is new and that people are uninformed of the risk and doing little to remedy its effect.

The community has been participating in processes to better understand the problem and discuss solutions starting with the Selenium Task Force, formed over a decade ago. More recently, the Elk River Alliance (ERA), a community-based water group in the Elk River watershed has attended several workshops and strategic planning sessions on selenium and other constituents of concern. The first opportunity was with the Strategic Advisory Panel on Selenium Management who tabled their recommendations to Teck in 2010. Teck accepted all of the Panel's recommendations. More recently, a condition in the permit for Teck's Line Creek mine expansion is to address incremental impacts of all five mines through the Elk Valley by developing a Cumulative Effects Management Framework (CEMF); ERA is part of the Working Group for the Framework. In the spring of 2013, the BC Environment Minister ordered Teck to produce the Elk Valley Water Quality Plan, which involved the community via many focused workshops and on-line public consultation. Citizens have also toured Teck's Line Creek treatment facility to better understand the biological removal of selenium from contaminated water.

Additionally, residents have been talking together about selenium at many public events sponsored by ERA; e.g. Friends Living on Water (FLOW) conversations; H2 oh! Public Forum and Field Trip; and, a Selenium Sunday Dialogue with community members including fly fishers. ERA also collects selenium data through our community-based water monitoring program on Alexander and Lizard Creeks to compare with Teck's selenium data.

The challenge of this issue is not just science but integrating it with society and the human experience in order to achieve a sustainable solution. It will require collaboration and an increase in our collective water literacy, in a process that must continue to build trust among community members, industry and government. The community remains focused on what can be done to optimize Teck's sustainability performance and protect the watershed. The focus of our collective action is stabilization and ultimately reduction of selenium concentrations in the Elk River.

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