

CANADIAN Mining Journal

Canada's First Mining Publication

COMMENT: World's most controversial mining projects

TEXT SIZE

By: Marilyn Scales

2014-08-27

Any organization who circulates a list with the title "Report on Top 10 Most Controversial Mining Projects" is opening itself up for objections. But that is exactly what **RepRisk** of Zurich, Switzerland, has published.

Companies making the list were ranked on what RepRisk calls ESG issues, those arising from environmental, social and governmental concerns, over the last two years. The operators are spread around the globe and include a variety of outputs.

The worst offender is **Lonmin's** Marikana platinum mine in South Africa. It earned an index of 77. The list of complaints is long: human rights abuses and corporate complicity, poor employment conditions, freedom of association and collective bargaining, violation of national legislation, and fraud. This is the mine where in 2012 clashes between striking miners and police resulted in 44 deaths.

Before our readers think "Yeah, but that's South Africa," note that two Canadian mines made the list.

In fourth place is the Mount Polley copper-gold mine belonging to **Imperial Metals**. It earned an index rating of 56 for the tailings dam breach that occurred on Aug. 4, 2014. It was cited for impacts on ecosystems/landscapes, local pollution, waste issues, impacts on communities, and violation of national legislation. Sadly, the write-up in the report contains an obvious misspelling and only information that was available in the first day or two after the spill.

In seventh place, again for a tailings spill, is the Obed Mountain coal mine owned by **Sherritt International** and operated by Coal Valley Resources. RepRisk gave it an index rating of 48, citing impacts on ecosystems/landscapes, local pollution, waste issues, impacts on communities, and violation of national legislation. The Obed spill occurred on Oct. 31, 2013 when tails escaped into the Athabasca River. Both Sherritt and the Alberta government have come under fire for "greenwashing" the environmental and health impacts of the spill.

For some reason **Barrick's** Pascua-Lama gold project did not make RepRisk's list. The controversies about mining among the glaciers of the Andes Mountains have certainly made their share of headlines. Either the complaints there are fewer than at the 10 mines included, or the project does not qualify because development is on hold.

All told, RepRisk has produced a list that will generate discussions about what should or should not be included.

All *CMJ* readers are urged to look at the report and get a conversation going.

For the full list of projects and the complete report click here, [Most Controversial Mining Projects](#)

Companies in This Story

[Barrick Gold Corporation](#)

[Imperial Metals Corporation](#)

[Sherritt International Corporation](#)

Properties in This Story

[Mount Polley Mine](#)

[Pascua-Lama Project \(Argentina\)](#)

[Pascua-Lama Project \(Chile\)](#)

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