

**Arlene Bell - Comox, British Columbia**

From: Arlene Bell, President, Board of Directors of the Comox Valley Unitarian Fellowship I have been delegated to write this letter on behalf of the Comox Valley Unitarian Fellowship (CVUF) to state our congregation's opposition to the Raven Underground Coal proposal.

As a member congregation of the Canadian Unitarian Council, the CVUF covenants to affirm and promote Seven Principles of Faith.

The fifth Principle states that we affirm "The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large." That is why we are responding to this call for submissions.

The seventh Principle states that we promote "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." Because this is a fundamental belief, we have no choice but to oppose a project that would do unconscionable harm to the ecosystems in the immediate area of the proposed mine and to the quality of the air and water far beyond that area. Our local community has recently completed a vision contained in its OCPs, Regional Growth Strategy and Sustainability Strategy. This vision includes a shift away from a mine-based economy to a sustainable economy based on the agriculture, tourism and shellfish industries. The Raven project is contrary to this vision. Federal and provincial ministers should not override the rights of local citizens and governments to determine the future direction and character of the Comox Valley.

Therefore we call upon the federal and provincial governments to set up an expert Panel Review with full public hearings. This would enable the public to have experts present their views and also to hear the views of the Governments' and the Proponent's experts.

It is our democratic right and the right of our interdependent web of all existence to have all the facts on the table.