

**Statement by Lisa Mitchell,
on behalf of the East Coast Environmental Law Association**

East Coast Environmental Law is an environmental law charity that responds to public inquiries, carries out legal and policy research, and presents educational resources to raise awareness about environmental laws in Atlantic Canada.

We have provided legal information and advice to many individuals, organizations, and community groups seeking to understand how the law applies to large-scale resource projects that are proposed or underway in their communities. Atlantic Gold Corporation has proposed three new gold mining operations in Nova Scotia, all of which are currently undergoing the legally-required environmental impact assessment process. Not surprisingly, we have received questions and inquiries about these projects.

We were, however, very surprised and quite frankly shocked to learn of the incident that took place at the company-sponsored public information session on May 23, 2019. John Perkins attended the session at the Sherbrooke Fire Hall to learn more about the management of toxic mine tailings.

Experience has demonstrated that gold mine tailings pose a very real risk to the environment, and citizens have every right to learn about them, to ask questions, and to be informed about the credentials and independence of the experts providing information to them.

East Coast Environmental Law works closely with community members and the public to build knowledge and capacity around the unique environmental law challenges that we face in Atlantic Canada.

We believe that project proponents and government decision-makers have a responsibility to ensure that members of the public have timely opportunities to engage in genuine discussion about proposed projects that may adversely affect their livelihoods, communities, and the environment.

Above all, it is critical that any person who wishes to participate in public engagement is able to do so in an atmosphere that is open, accessible, and safe. John Perkins was not given that opportunity. The violent and abhorrent treatment that he was subjected to on May 23 cannot go uncontested, which is why we are supporting John in his efforts to hold those responsible to account and to ensure that others will continue to participate in future public consultations.