

## **Submission to Professional Reliance Review**

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### **Divided loyalties**

*The failure of professional reliance*

In 1959, at the 100<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the American Oil Industry, the famous Hungarian Physicist Edward Teller (father of the H-bomb) was the first scientist to warn the oil industry about global warming.

He said that as a result of unchecked carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuel, the earth's climate would heat up "...and there is a possibility that the icecaps will start melting and the levels of oceans will rise." Thus began the most intensive professional denial and science cover-up of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not only did the petroleum industry never mention Edward Teller's dire warnings, they relied on professionals (professional reliance) to produce false science with which to deny climate change altogether. They went on to buy the support of politicians with generous political donations, and provided volumes of misinformation to ensure the global consumption of oil would continue.

On January 9<sup>th</sup> 2018, New York City announced it was suing the world's five largest publicly traded oil companies, seeking to hold them responsible for present and future damage to the city from climate change. The suit, filed Tuesday against BP, Chevron, Conoco-Phillips, ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell, claims the companies together produced 11 percent of all of global-warming gases through the oil and gas products they have sold over the years. It also charges that the companies and the industry (their professional engineers and scientists) have known for some time about the consequences but sought to obscure them. Really, this is a historic, colossal failure of the professional reliance system and yet, who is surprised by this? Apparently, the BC government is and has asked BC citizens for their opinions on the professional reliance model.

Regardless of any professional code of conduct, professional foresters, engineers and biologists come face to face with a conflict of interest from time to time. They need to choose between a code of ethics, or the needs of their employer. It is fair to say the person or company that writes your paycheck typically gets the last word. If your employer doesn't like your advice, you have 3 choices: You can shut up and keep working; You can quit your job; You can expose your employer's wrong-doing to the government or media--which would pretty much ensure you'd get fired and blacklisted for life. Not much incentive to do the right thing. If you think I'm being over dramatic, just ask one of the many scientists working for the Conservative government under the Harper regime.

When the BC Liberals first came to power in 2001, one of the first things they did was reduce government oversight in the resource sector and replace it with the professional reliance model. In less than one decade, BC's Forest Service lost over 1,000 positions, or roughly one quarter of its workforce. With the losses, the ability of public servants to oversee BC's forests has become hopelessly compromised. There are not enough people employed to ensure the public interest (or nature) is being protected. The corporate interest however, thanks to professional reliance, is well looked after.

Imagine if we applied the same professional reliance model to BC's construction industry. Instead of employing hundreds of expensive civic employees who work as building inspectors, we could allow building contractors to self-regulate and self-approve their projects. Such a proposal would get laughed out of any city council meeting—anywhere and wouldn't even make first reading! And yet we are willing to use professional reliance models to manage our forests & wildlife, our freshwater resources, and our salmon, which many would argue are as important—perhaps more so, than mere buildings.

Proving that corporate engineers, foresters, biologists, and others have broken the law is difficult. Most of us are, after all, just ordinary citizens who are concerned with what they see. Common sense suggests however, that the on-going relationship between a company and its paid professionals, is bound to lead to a conflict of interest which will benefit the company to the detriment of the public. As a citizen, I am not comfortable with the corporate professional reliance model in BC right now. I do not trust corporations that operate with little or no public oversight in remote parts of our province.

--I would like to see more government employees on the ground double checking corporate professionals.

--I urge you to restore or increase the power of FLNRO District Managers but equally important, to ensure District Managers act in a more neutral way, protecting the public interest and the resource sector equally.

--Forest licensees should be made to publish their 5 year cutting plans for public scrutiny as they did prior to the 2002 enactment of FPRA.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.