



TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

253 – 4th Avenue North • Williams Lake, BC V2G 4T4 • Phone (250) 392-3918 • Fax (250) 398-5798

TASEKO MINES' PR CAMPAIGN WILL NOT SAVE TEZTAN BINY

Williams Lake, B.C., April 16, 2012: The Tsilhqot'in Nation has rejected claims by Taseko Mines Ltd. (TML) that TML's New Prosperity Project will "save" Teztan Biny (Fish Lake). The Tsilhqot'in Nation has no doubt that this "new" mining plan merely puts the lake on temporary life support and would result in the same devastating cultural and environmental impacts that prompted the Federal Government to reject the original Prosperity Mine proposal in 2010.

"Surrounding a sacred lake with a massive open pit, one of Canada's largest tailings dams, and a giant waste rock pile, and then putting it at risk of contamination from toxic tailings discharge is not our definition of saving anything," says Tsilhqot'in National Government Tribal Chair Chief Joe Alphonse. "We saw in the last environmental assessment how far the company's predictions were from reality. The company said there would be no significant impacts. But an independent federal panel described a whole range of massive cultural and environmental impacts. This company has no credibility with us."

Xeni Gwet'in Chief Marilyn Baptiste said: "This version of the mine has already been deemed a greater environmental risk by the independent panel in 2010, and by the company's own statements in the last review".

Chief Baptiste also noted that the extra \$300 million the company is allocating to the project is \$37 million less than it previously stated would be needed for this alternative mine plan. "New" Prosperity also does not appear to involve new mitigation measures beyond those considered in the 2010 review, when the federal panel rejected this alternative design for the mine because of "greater environmental risk" and the likely contamination of Teztan Biny in any event.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation remains concerned that the proposal threatens the Fraser River's last strong and consistent salmon run and puts Lower Taseko Lake at risk of direct discharge of tailings into its tributaries.

The "new" proposal would still destroy 81% of Teztan Biny's fish spawning grounds, and according to the company's own statements would put the lake at risk of contamination over time. Yanah Biny (Little Fish Lake), where Tsilhqot'in homes and graves are located, would still be completely destroyed under hundreds of millions of tonnes of acid waste.

Chief Alphonse said: "To approve this mine would make a mockery of the environmental assessment process. This proposal cannot and will not be approved. Once again, we find ourselves defending our statements – we are against this proposed mine. It will be devastating to the environment and our culture."

Media Contacts: Chief Marilyn Baptiste: 250-267-1401 Chief Joe Alphonse: 250-305-8282

Attachment: *Ten facts that show why Prosperity Mine proposal cannot be approved*



TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

253 – 4th Avenue North • Williams Lake, BC V2G 4T4 • Phone (250) 392-3918 • Fax (250) 398-5798

Ten facts that show why resubmitted Prosperity Mine proposal cannot be approved

1. The CEAA review panel process was very different from the BC EAO rubber-stamp decision. Its report found immitigable, devastating impacts to the local fish stocks and endangered grizzly populations, and to the existing and future rights of the Tsilhqot'in and its youth. Then Environment Minister Jim Prentice described the report's findings as "*scathing*" and "*probably the most condemning I have ever read.*"
2. The company knows its new option is worse than its first plan. TML's V.P. Corporate Affairs, Brian Battison, was clear in his Mar. 22, 2010, opening presentation to the CEAA hearings, when he stated: "*Developing Prosperity means draining Fish Lake. We wish it were otherwise. We searched hard for a different way. A way to retain the lake and have the mine. But there is no viable alternative. The lake and the deposit sit side by side. It is not possible to have one without the loss of the other.*"
3. The point was emphasised by TML's VP of engineering, Scott Jones, who stated: "*What happens to the water quality in Fish Lake, if you try and preserve that body of water with the tailings facility right up against it, is that over time the water quality in Fish Lake will become equivalent to the water quality in the pore water of the tailings facility, particularly when it's close.*"
4. This proposal does not address the issues that led to the rejection of the first bid last year. Fish Lake will be affected by the toxic waste and eventually die, and it will be surrounded by a massive open pit mine and related infrastructure for decades. The Tsilhqot'in people will not have access to their spiritual place, and the area will never be returned to the current pristine state.

It is not even new. It is "Mine Development Plan 2." TML states on page 20 of its project submission: "*Option 2 is the basis for the New Prosperity design ...The concepts that lead to the configuration of MDP Option 2 have been utilized to develop the project description currently being proposed.*"

5. This option was looked at and rejected last year by the company, Environment Canada and the CEAA review panel. For example, page 65 of the review report states: "*The Panel agrees with the observations made by Taseko and Environment Canada that Mine Development Plans 1 and 2 would result in greater long-term environmental risk than the preferred alternative.*"

6. The new \$300 million in proposed spending is to cover the costs of relocating mine waste a little further away. There is nothing in the ‘new’ plan to mitigate all the environmental impacts identified in the previous assessment. TML states in its economic statement: *“The new development design, predicated on higher long term prices for both copper and gold, would result in a direct increase in capital costs of \$200 million to purchase additional mining equipment to relocate the tailings dam and to move the mine waste around Fish Lake to new locations. This redesign also adds \$100 million in direct extra operating costs over the 20-year mine life to accomplish that task.”* In fact, this new spending is actually \$37 million less than the company said last year it would have to spend just to go with the option that it and the review panel agreed would be worse for the environment.

7. The federal government is required under the Constitution to protect First Nations, which have been found to be under serious threat in this case, and is internationally committed to do so under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These duties are every bit as clear regarding this resubmitted proposal.

8. Approving this mine would show the Environmental Assessment process is meaningless, and would demonstrate that governments are ignoring their obligations - as the Assembly of First Nations national chiefs-in-assembly made this crystal clear this summer in their resolution of support for the Tsilhqot’in.

9. The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has opposed this project since it was first raised in 1995. It soundly rejected it again last year. It has no reason to support it now. Nor does Environment Canada, which, as the CEAA report noted last year, also found option 2 to be worse than the original bid.

10. There are many other more worthy projects to be pursued – the vast majority of which, if not all will require working with aboriginal communities. Natural Resources Canada estimates there is \$350 billion-\$500 billion worth of such potential projects in Canada. Governments, industry and investors do not need to go backwards by pushing this confrontational proposal and rebuffing efforts by First Nations to find a way to create a better mining system that would benefit everyone in the long run.