



TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Top Canadian Lake Ecologist Says Fish Lake Will be Dead in Ten Years if Mine Proceeds

August 19, 2013, Williams Lake, B.C: The evidence from independent and government experts against the proposed New Prosperity Mine proves the Tsilhqot'in Nation is fully justified in its total opposition to the proposed Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) proposal.

Dr. John Stockner from the UBC Fisheries Centre, a senior lake research scientist and past associate editor of Canada's most prestigious aquatic journal, the Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Science, told the federal panel hearing on the proposed New Prosperity mine that the project would render the lake dead to fish within a decade. Stockner testified the lake would effectively become an aquarium, and nutrient loading and algae blooms would create oxygen deficiencies in the water, resulting in a massive die-off of rainbow trout.

"I feel like a town crier because what I have to tell you after considerable thought, I am of the firm opinion that within a decade, Fish Lake will die. It will die for fish," Stockner told the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency review Panel hearings. His findings were echoed by Darren Brandt, another lake ecologist who studies how lakes respond to human disturbances.

Federal and provincial government experts raised serious concerns about the proposal that add to Stockner's and Brandt's findings during the technical phase of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's review panel hearings.

This evidence has reinforced the Tsilhqot'in Nation's total opposition to the project during the past two weeks of community hearings and will continue to do so as the hearings move this week to the Secwepemc Nation and final arguments on Friday August 23rd.

During the technical sessions the federal panel heard concerns from experts from six different federal and provincial departments about the quality of work done by Taseko Mines in preparing its environmental impact statement.

The federal technical experts all explained that, in critical areas dealing with technical feasibility of the company's assessment and its plans to manage Fish Lake, the information was deficient, inconsistent, or simply missing, causing significant uncertainty to the point where, in some case, they were simply unable to evaluate the proposal.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment Canada, along with the provincial Ministry of Energy and Mines, all expressed concerns that Taseko had significantly underestimated the impacts of its project on Fish Lake, or overestimated its ability to mitigate impacts to water quality. All expressed doubt about whether the company would be able to build the mine in ways that would adequately maintain the Fish Lake ecosystem.

The panel also heard the company concede what government experts and the Tsilhqot'in have raised as a central concern: the company's plan to recirculate Fish Lake's flows to keep it alive is untested and unproven at the proposed scale of the New Prosperity operation. Other experts testified that there is no

evidence that the complicated water treatment system proposed for Fish Lake would be technically feasible, or that the costs of treatment would be affordable by the company.

Over the past 10 days of community hearings in Tsilhqot'in communities, the Panel heard unanimous and overwhelming opposition to the project – not a single presenter spoke in favour of Taseko Mines Ltd.'s proposed mine.

“The Tsilhqot'in Nation appreciates that the federal and provincial experts are doing their jobs and looking at this project seriously”, said Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair for the Tsilhqot'in National Government. “We have said all along that any independent professional that looks at this mine plan will support our concerns. Therefore, it's not a surprise that federal and provincial government experts have weighed in with their doubts that this plan is even technically feasible.”

Roger William, Chief of the Xenigwet'in, one of the six Tsilhqot'in communities: “Our communities are opposed to turning Teztan Biny into the world's largest fish tank, with no way to change the water. Even Tsilhqot'in Elders understand that fish tanks need fresh water regularly if the fish are to survive. No wonder that federal and provincial experts raised serious concerns as well.”

“From what I have witnessed in the hearings, similar concerns from 2010 are coming forward with respect to the potential adverse effects to fish and fish habitat, including the infringement on our rights and potential Title”, said Chief Russell Myers Ross, Chief of the Yunesit'in, one of the six Tsilhqot'in communities.

Chief Alphonse: “Taseko Mine's dog and pony show gets worse every time they come back into our community. What a waste of time, what a waste of resources. On the positive side, I think the company helps unify the Tsilhqot'in and develop leadership in our own communities. I am so proud of my community, my Elders, my youth, and the upcoming leaders who have come forward and have made it clear to the Panel that this mine proposal is not a part of our shared values for a sustainable future.”

Chief William: “After the technical hearings, we have even more concerns, as we have learned from government experts that the risks to Big Onion Lake, Wasp Lake and the Taseko River have been underestimated by this company and that the Panel lacks the proof that the company can capture the contaminated seepage that will arrive downstream decades after the mine closes. It's incomprehensible that anyone in their right mind would approve a project that required water re-circulation, groundwater capture, and water treatment *forever*.”

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ATTACHMENT: Federal and Provincial Government Concerns with New Prosperity Mine Proposal