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Tsilhqot'in
National
Government



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

First Nation Leadership Stands United With Tsilhqot'in Nation's Opposition to Taseko Mines' Controversial New Prosperity Mine

Representatives of the First Nations Leadership Council, the BC Assembly of First Nations and the Tsilhqot'in Nation providing public comment in advance of the Federal Review Panel for the proposed New Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine project. The public hearing will begin in Williams Lake, B.C. on July 22, 2013, and will be completed within approximately 30 days.

"We are glad to work in solidarity with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit and the BC Assembly of First Nations on these issues of national importance as they affect Aboriginal people across Canada. We will be at the Supreme Court of Canada on November 7, 2013 for our Title Case and yet still we start panel hearings for the proposed Prosperity mine July 22, 2013. This proposed mine is within the Tsilhqot'in claim area and has already been denied once by the Minister of Environment. This is precedent setting and we will not back down," said Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman of the Tsilhqot'in National Government. "Our own experience with this company, Taseko Mines Ltd., should inspire First Nations to stand up for your land, not cave in to industry and to express that development has to be on our terms - we need a meaningful say on our land and bad projects should not proceed in an area as sensitive and culturally important as Teztan Biny."

"The Tsilhqot'in Nation has demonstrated extreme patience – we have said we are not opposed to economic development, but that this is the wrong project, in the wrong place and it cannot be approved," stated Chief Roger William of Xenigwet'in "We will share with the Panel our unchangeable values and express our deep concerns of the threat to Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) and the contamination of our lakes and streams. We firmly believe that like the last Panel, this review will demonstrate the extremely high risk that such a mine poses in such a sacred place."

BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould remarked "Yesterday's provincial Throne Speech spoke of securing non-treaty economic benefit agreements, finalizing long-term treaties and seeking additional revenue-sharing agreements. We all want opportunities for economic development but not at all costs. Our culture and lands are vitally critical to the health and well-being of our communities."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, said "This bad project is one of the first to be forced through the now gutted federal environmental review process borne out of the Harper Government' omnibus bills C-38 and C-45. If this review fails to come to the same conclusion as the last one, then we'll know that the changes to the EA process are indeed about approving disastrous and unscrupulous projects over the objections of First Nations and the general public and at the great expense to the environment."

Robert Phillips, member of the Political Executive of the First Nations Summit, stated "This is also a test case of the federal government's commitment to First Nations Title, Rights and Treaty Rights. If spending 20 years in court proving our rights means nothing at the end of the day, then we only see conflict on the ground."

For further comment please contact:

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