



## TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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### **Tsilhqot'in call on Harper government to heed the science and ignore industry lobbying in Fish Lake decision**

#### **Will the Harper government listen to their own experts?**

**Ottawa: Oct. 8, 2013:** B.C.'s Tsilhqot'in Nation is calling on the Harper government to listen to its own scientists and ignore the political lobbying by Taseko Mines Ltd. (TML) and the mining industry that could undermine the Environmental Assessment process in the case of the latest bid to create a massive, but very low-grade ore mine at Teztan Biny (Fish Lake).

TML has even boasted of its lobbying success with federal Ministers, reporting that it believes the government is [on side after meeting with Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver](#), and has run a media campaign to discredit as “misinformation” concerns about its new proposal – [concerns](#) that have been raised by experts from various federal and provincial ministries during the panel process.

“This lobbying is particularly alarming when you combine it with the company’s mischaracterization of the scientific evidence at the environmental hearings. We are in Ottawa to make sure that everyone has their facts straight. This is a bad project that threatens our Nation and culture. Contrary to the company’s claims, approval of this project would be bad news and put the government and the mining industry on a collision course with the Tsilhqot'in people and First Nations from across Canada who stand by our side,” said Chief Joe Alphonse, Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government.

“We are in Ottawa this week to try to make sure the government understands that the environmental and Aboriginal rights and title issues have not been solved by this new mine proposal, which is as bad, and according to the company’s own prior statements, even worse than the previous one,” said Chief Roger William of Xenigwet'in First Nations Government.

“We are also asking the media to look at the facts and let the public know just what it is that the government is being asked to approve – an unproven and risky scientific experiment that has never been done anywhere on the planet. The potential long-term liabilities to taxpayers and First Nations are unprecedented, and there is no point pushing this unwanted and unsupportable mine over the objections of both the scientific facts and First Nations rights and Title,” said Chief William.

Chief Alphonse said despite the company’s lobbying - and its media campaigns to promote the mine as a major economic boon and dismiss all concerns about the project as misinformation - the facts lead to a totally opposite conclusion.

The 2010 panel report on the first proposal was described as “scathing” by then Environment Minister Jim Prentice. The new proposal is based on an option that both the company and environment Canada said in 2010 would be worse for the environment than that original plan, which was rejected by the government. Despite claims by the company that it has addressed all previous concerns with this “new” option, TML’s Environmental Impact Statement was sent back three times because of incorrect, missing, or unintelligible information.

This summer’s panel hearings finally had to proceed without the company providing all the information requested, and during the technical hearings the flaws and concerns about the project were highlighted by experts from several federal and provincial ministries, as well as independent experts.

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For example, Natural Resources Canada advised the panel that contaminated seepage would drain from the Tailings Storage Facility to the groundwater at 11 times the rate predicted by Taseko Mines Ltd., downstream to Teztan Biny and other water bodies. Environment Canada (EC) described future water quality in Fish Lake as “marginal for the protection of aquatic life” even before this increased seepage is taken into account.

Another example - EC and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) both described TML's proposal to recirculate Teztan Biny flows as “unproven”, “untested” and unprecedented” at this scale. DFO specifically predicted contamination of Teztan Biny if the mine proceeds.

These are just some of the many concerns raised by experts at the hearings, and a list of these statements, and links to where they can be found in the hearing transcripts, is provided below.

The company has also tried to imply that it has consulted with First Nations and has addressed their concerns.

“Presenting us with a final decision and plan for resubmitting its mining bid is not consultation. As for its approach to First Nations, this is the same company that tried to get our culture, even our prayers, banned from these hearings,” said Chief Alphonse.

There is no support for this mine from the Tsilhqot'in. Every member who spoke at the community hearings spoke against the mine.

What is more, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Summit, the BC Assembly of First Nations, and the National Assembly of First Nations chiefs have all passed resolutions vowing to stand with the Tsilhqot'in against this project and making it clear that the government's honour and credibility is on the line with this project, which is has become a BC and national poster child for all that is wrong with mining.

The Tsilhqot'in have already won recognition of their land claims and their Title and rights case will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada next month.

“Unlike the company and the mining industry, we had extremely limited opportunity to sit down and explain our position with government ministers face to face, so we are asking the media to look at the facts and ensure that the government and the public are aware of exactly what is at stake,” said Chief William.

### **Media:**

**Chief Joe Alphonse – 250-305-8282**

**Chief Roger William -250-267-6593**

### **Links:**

TML memo to federal government after meeting with NR Minister Joe Oliver:

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/taseko-mines-praises-ottawa-ahead-of-environmental-hearings-on-bc-mine-215423241.html?device=mobile>

Backgrounder – list of concerns rose by government and other experts at 21013 review panel hearings: [Read 'Government experts raised red flags on proposal to build mine: summary of concerns' here](#)

AFN Resolution opposing New Prosperity mine (Scroll to TNG resolution #29) :

<http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/aga-2011-resolutions.pdf>

AFN resolution – Tsilhqot'in Title and Rights case: <http://www.afn.ca/index.php/en/news-media/latest-news/assembly-of-first-nations-expresses-full-support-for-tsilhqotin-nation>