



**ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS
BULLETIN
ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS**

473, RUE ALBERT STREET
8th FLOOR / 8^e ÉTAGE
OTTAWA ON K1R 5B4
(613) 241-6789 telephone / téléphone (613) 241-5808 fax / télécopieur

September 2, 2010

AFN and First Nations in British Columbia Call on Federal Government to Stop Mining Project that will Destroy Environment and Way of Life for First Nations

OTTAWA, ON – Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo strongly supports the call by the Tsilhqot'in Nation Government and First Nation leaders from across British Columbia to prevent a mining project that would destroy the pristine Teztan Biny (Fish Lake), a traditional First Nations fishery and sacred ceremonial site near Prince George, B.C.

First Nation leaders from the Tsilhqot'in Nation Government and British Columbia were in Ottawa today delivering their message to the federal government which is expected to decide next week on whether or not to allow the Taseko Mines Limited Prosperity Mining Project to proceed.

“The Teztan Biny – or Fish Lake - has sustained the five member First Nation communities of the Tsilhqot'in Nation for generations. The proposed mine will not bring prosperity to First Nations in the region and could instead devastate their communities and their ways of life,” said AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo, referencing a study published by Simon Fraser University economist Marvin Shaffer which states the mine will produce little net gain for B.C. and may in fact cause a net financial loss due to electricity subsidies, infrastructure maintenance, and carbon offset goals.

The plan for the proposed gold and copper Prosperity Mine involves draining the Teztan Biny completely to create a tailings pond that will collect toxic effluent from the mining activities. This would destroy millions of cultural artifacts in the region of the lake, devastate the surrounding environment and permanently threaten the rich heritage of the territories of the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

The project is unanimously opposed by the five member communities of the Tsilhqot'in Nation, First Nations Summit Grand Chief Ed John, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Grand Chief Stuart Phillip (both of whom attended today's press conference) and the Assembly of First Nations.

“There was no meaningful consultation with the affected First Nations and governments have a legal duty to consult with our people. First Nations across Canada are eagerly

awaiting the government decision that will determine if there is any value or integrity in the environmental assessments for major projects, or whether First Nations must turn to litigation and other means to assert our rights and protect our lands and cultures,” said National Chief Atleo.

“First Nations in BC are not, on principle, opposed to development where cultural, environmental and economic issues are dealt with to their satisfaction as we saw recently with two tax revenue sharing agreements announced last week,” said AFN BC Regional Chief Jody Wilson Raybould, who attended today’s press conference in Ottawa, adding: “This is not the case with Prosperity Mines which seeks to destroy Teztan Biny. Common sense in our Province seems to have given way to greed and the BC AFN strongly urges the Government of Canada to do the right thing and listen to the Tsilhqot’in Nation and reject the proposal in the interests of all Canadians.”

In addition to the impacts on Teztan Biny, the proposed mining project would also impact the Tsihqot’in Nations’ rights to hunt and trap, rights that have been recognized by the British Columbia Supreme Court. The Teztan Biny area is a traditional food gathering area for the Tsilhqot’in. The lake provides trout and the region around the lake provides hunting and trapping grounds that could be destroyed by the proposed mine.

These concerns are supported by an independent panel created by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, which found that the proposed project will negatively impact fish habitat, local wildlife, navigation, and traditional land use and that the mine would permanently destroy lands and waters described as an “an important teaching environment” for Tsilhqot’in youth, an “important source of fish for their sustenance” and “a place of spiritual power and healing for the Tsilhqot’in”. The panel also concluded that the project will likely spread damage into tributaries of the Fraser River, which is currently facing severe depletion of its native salmonid populations.

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada.

-30-

Contact information:

Jenna Young, Communications Officer, Assembly of First Nations 613-241-6789, ext 401, 613-314-8157 (mobile) or jyoung@afn.ca

Don Kelly, A/Communications Director, Assembly of First Nations 613-292-2787 or dkelly@afn.ca