



TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Tsilhqot'in Nation welcomes Court Victory

Williams Lake, BC: The Tsilhqot'in Nation welcomes today's B.C. Supreme Court decision to grant an interlocutory injunction against an exploration permit issued by British Columbia to Taseko Mines Ltd. (TML) for an extensive drilling program in the Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) area. TML had planned to start the drilling work as early as next week.

The injunction prohibits TML from carrying out the drilling program until the B.C. Supreme Court has ruled on the Tsilhqot'in Nation's legal challenge to the drilling permit issued in July of 2017, based on breaches of the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate the Tsilhqot'in. That case was argued in B.C. Supreme Court last week, June 25-29.

Taseko's proposed drilling program is for the stated purpose of supporting construction of the New Prosperity Mine, despite the fact that the Federal Government rejected New Prosperity over four years ago, and the proposed mine cannot be built as matters stand. Two independent federal panels have confirmed the unique and special significance of Teztan Biny (Fish Lake), Yanah Biny (Little Fish Lake) and Nabas (the surrounding area) to the Tsilhqot'in people as a valued hunting, trapping and gathering grounds. This area is also significant as a place for ceremony, spiritual practices and community gatherings, as an actively used cultural school, and as "home" to the many Tsilhqot'in members born and raised there.

The Tsilhqot'in Nation is cautiously relieved that the B.C. Supreme Court has temporarily protected Teztan Biny and Nabas from further damage and disruption by TML, over the opposition of the Nation, and in the face of the rejection of New Prosperity by the Federal Government.

The drilling permit in question was approved on the final day of the outgoing Liberal Government. The Tsilhqot'in Nation calls on the current BC Government to step up and honour its commitment to the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by protecting this critical cultural space from further threat in the name of a mining project that has been rejected twice for its unacceptable environmental and cultural impacts.

Quotes:

Nits'il?in (Chief) Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman, Tsilhqot'in National Government:

"The Tsilhqot'in Nation being granted this interlocutory injunction is one more small victory in the long standing fight to protect Teztan Biny and the surrounding area. This permit created a lot of distress for Tsilhqot'in communities directly in the midst of the largest wildfire season that we have ever seen."

"It's amazing that a company like TML continues to try to advance their interests even when there is virtually no chance that the Federal Government will grant a go ahead on this project."

“We were caught between two parties on this issue. The outgoing Liberal party left a hand grenade for the incoming NDP party. This is a low blow tactic by the BC Liberals. The T̓silhqot̓in calls on the current B.C Government to step up and implement the U.N. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, along with the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as they have long committed to do. It’s time the B.C Government pulled the pin on this project.”

Nits’il?in (Chief) Russell Myers Ross, Vice-Chair, T̓silhqot̓in National Government:

“Our people are cautiously optimistic as we continue on the reactionary fight to protect our sacred sites. The T̓silhqot̓in have long had a vision for Te̓tan Biny and surrounding area as outlined in the Dasiqox Tribal Park. As Canada begins implementing Indigenous Protected Areas, we call on BC to take a hard look at where their vision for the future of this province lies.”

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