



Plea for international review of B.C. mine dismissed at company's AGM

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TORONTO – An Alaskan tribal government says a Canadian company has rejected its last hope for stopping a mine on a colossal gold reserve that borders its territory and is located in northwestern British Columbia.

Aboriginal representatives from B.C. and Alaska and environmental activists attended Seabridge Gold Inc.'s (TSX:SEA) annual general meeting in Toronto on Wednesday to ask the company to consider an international review of its KSM mine.

The proposed gold-and-copper mine is 35 kilometres from the Alaska border, and the project is considered the largest undeveloped gold reserve in North America, with more than 38-million ounces of gold.

The project's environment-assessment application has been approved by B.C. and Canada, and the company has entered into a benefits' agreement with two northern B.C. First Nations.

Fredrick Olsen Jr., vice-president of Alaska's Village of Kasaan, said aboriginal groups still have many concerns about the risks of mine run-off to water and fish habitats, and the potential for a tailings-facility breach.

The plea was rejected because the company said concerns from both Canada and the United States were already sufficiently addressed during the environmental-assessment process.

Olsen, who represented 13 southeastern Alaska tribes at the meeting, and representatives of the Tahltan Nation in B.C., Earthworks and MiningWatch Canada, asked Seabridge Gold to look into a review by the International Joint Commission. It is the organization that resolves transboundary disputes between the United States and Canada.

Olsen said the KSM mine poses a looming threat, especially after the collapse of the tailings' pond at the Imperial Metals' (TSX:III) Mount Polley mine in B.C.'s Cariboo region last August.

He said he doesn't want to have to worry about their water being contaminated forever.

"How much gold do we need?" he said in an interview.

"We only have this one environment. And, you know, ask California about it," he added, referring to the current drought in the state.

A joint statement from the tribes and Earthworks MiningWatch Canada said the KSM Mine uses outdated waste-storage methods and will manage and treat an unprecedented amount of mine water annually.

A Seabridge Gold representative wasn't available for an interview Thursday, but the company confirmed in a statement that it dismissed the prospect of another review.

The company said it has already gone through the process of demonstrating that the project is safe, and has received endorsement from both U.S. and Canadian regulators, as well as First Nations most affected by the mine's development.

Seabridge Gold said it agrees there should never be another Mount Polley-like incident, and its tailings-dam design is state-of-the-art, was reviewed over a seven-year period, and has been endorsed by B.C., Canada and the Nisga'a Nation.

Despite Seabridge Gold's assurances, Olsen said he has his doubts.

"You know, the guys who made Mount Polley, they're smart," he said.

"I'm sure the guys who designed it, they have degrees and they're smart and they'd probably beat me at Scrabble. But it failed."

— by Cara McKenna in Vancouver