



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

May 10, 2010

Teztan Biny Stocks or Taseko Mines Ltd Stocks?

Federal Panel concludes public hearings that will decide fate of sacred lake

Williams Lake - The Tsilhqot'in people came out in force to defend their lands, their sacred waters and the future of their culture before the Federal Panel conducting the environmental assessment of Taseko Mines Ltd.'s proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine.

Tsilhqot'in participation in the Panel's hearings, which started on World Water Day, March 22 and came to close on May 3, 2010, was emotional and overwhelming. Hearings in the Tsilhqot'in communities were packed with concerned Tsilhqot'in members, from children as young as 5 or 6 to Tsilhqot'in elders in their 80s, imploring the Panel not to support a project that requires the complete destruction of Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) – a sacred and ceremonial site for the Tsilhqot'in people and a highly productive lake fishery and hunting ground that has sustained Tsilhqot'in people for generations.

The Panel heard from many Tsilhqot'in children, elders and educators that Teztan Biny is actively used as a "traditional school" for passing down culture and knowledge to the next generations. Linda Smith, like many Tsilhqot'in members, explained to the Panel that "Fish Lake is a spiritual sanctuary, a spiritual centre of the Tsilhqot'in." In the words of Cecil Grinder, "the wildlife, the fish, the birds, trees, plants and berries and so forth are a major source of our food diet. The majority of the Tsilhqot'in people depend on this food source."

The Panel heard speaker after speaker describe the potential loss of Teztan Biny for an open-pit mine as unfathomable. In the words of Geraldine Williams, "Fish Lake is my family's home land. If destroyed there is going to be so much pain that cannot be cured. It is going to be like one huge poison."

"The most revealing sessions were the technical hearings, where experts and even government regulators confirmed our concerns and some of the worst fears for our communities," said Marilyn Baptiste, Chief of the Xeni Gwet'in, one of the six bands that comprise the Tsilhqot'in Nation.

In fact, key federal departments presented information to the Panel about fundamental problems with the project that could lead to significant environmental impacts even after the mitigation measures proposed by Taseko Mines Ltd to date.

Environment Canada advised the Panel of its view that there were two alternative mining options that would leave Fish Lake intact, but Taseko Mines Ltd had rejected these alternatives for economic reasons that Environment Canada said could be overstated. Transport Canada told the Panel that the project would have significant adverse effects on navigation (including complete loss of access by the Tsilhqot'in to a sacred island in Teztan Biny for traditional ceremonies) and that Taseko had not presented any proposal at all to mitigate these impacts.

Officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) informed the Panel that the project failed to meet the basic requirements of its "no net loss" policy for the destruction of fish habitat. They highlighted several risks with Taseko Mines Ltd's plan to construct a replacement fish reservoir ("Prosperity Lake"), and stated that even if successful, this reservoir would not come close to replacing the highly productive fish habitat that would be destroyed by the project, including Fish Lake, Little Fish Lake and associated streams. DFO's views were confirmed by Dr. Gordon Hartman, a pre-eminent fish biologist, who advised the Panel that the chances of successfully replacing the fish habitat that would be destroyed by this project were exceedingly remote.

Dr. Ann Maest, an internationally renowned expert and the main geochemist consultant to the US Environmental Protection Agency, informed the Panel that fundamental problems with Taseko Mines Ltd's modelling meant that potential water quality impacts were drastically understated, and that water treatment would be necessary, perhaps forever. Dr. Kevin Morin, an authority on acid-rock drainage, questioned whether water treatment would protect ground and surface water in this case, and predicted contamination from the mine site into adjacent water bodies, including the Taseko River, a productive salmon fishery upstream from the Fraser River.

Tsilhqot'in leaders and members have vowed to build from the momentum of the Panel hearings to save Teztan Biny. "We will fearlessly carry on the proud legacy of our ancestors," stated Percy Guichon, Chief Tsi Del Del (Alexis Creek Indian Band). "The Tsilhqot'in will continue the fight to protect our land with whatever means necessary. Just because the panel hearings are complete does not mean it is done, we all look forward to the report from the Panel in 60 days."

"This is far from over," declared Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "The Federal Panel Review process is representative of a minor skirmish. The final battle may take place on the land itself."

- 30 -

For further information, please contact:

Chief Marilyn Baptiste, Xení Gwet'in First Nations Government
(250) 394-7023, ext. 202

For technical information, please contact:

Amy Crook, Centre for Science in Public Participation

t. 250.721.3627
c. 250.896.3627