



## ***PRESS RELEASE***

For immediate release

### **Tsilhqot'in National Government denounces “rubber stamp” of approval from BC Environmental Assessment Office for Prosperity mine project**

January 18, 2010, Williams Lake – The Tsilhqot'in National Government denounced the BC Environmental Assessment Office (BCEAO) decision to grant an environmental assessment certificate (EA) to Taseko Mines Ltd. for a proposed massive mine at Teztan Biny (Fish Lake), an area where the Tsilhqot'in Nation holds proven Aboriginal hunting and trapping rights.

“We are disappointed, but not surprised,” said Chief Marilyn Baptiste, Xení Gwet'in First Nation. “It has been clear from the outset that this is a rubber stamp exercise.” The Chief explained that the BCEAO has rushed to a decision based on the same record that an independent federal panel has deemed fundamentally deficient on key issues.

One issue on which the proposed mine has been found deficient is current use of the area by First Nations for traditional purposes. The federal Panel has held that Taseko's treatment of this issue is deficient and has extended First Nations the opportunity to provide this critical information directly at the public hearings to be held by the Panel.

“The BCEAO originally said it would attend these hearings and use the information generated there,” Chief Baptiste pointed out. “Then, over our objections, it rushes to this decision before the hearings can be held. This shows how much BCEAO values First Nations concerns.”

“I find it ironic that the province claims it has done ‘due diligence’ in terms of consulting with First Nations,” stated Chief Ivor Myers, Yunesit'in (Stone) First Nation. “The Province rejected all of our efforts to meet with them to set up a consultation process that would work for our people and our communities. Despite government and company efforts to put a positive spin on this, we do not agree with the proposal. Investors should be aware that this project is not a done deal.”

## **TNG DENOUNCES BCEAO RUBBER STAMP - 2**

TNG does not support destroying Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) and Nabaš (Little Fish Lake) as part of the proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine in central British Columbia. Taseko's plan is to drain the pristine, trout-bearing Fish Lake and dump waste rock there. Little Fish Lake would be turned into a tailings pond. The mine will transform the Teztan Biny watershed into an industrial zone, and disrupt the cultural, spiritual and ceremonial practices that the Tsilhqot'in have exercised on these lands for centuries. TNG has also expressed concerns that the mine will not only destroy important fish habitats, but also will heavily affect grizzly bears, moose, deer, beaver and other wildlife in the region.

Members of the Nak'azdli First Nation joined TNG in condemning the BCEAO decision. In March 2009, the BC government granted an environmental assessment certificate to Terrane Metals for a proposed massive mine on Nak'azdli traditional lands near Shus Nadloh (Mt. Milligan) in the headwaters of the Peace River Basin. Chief Fred Sam said, "There is a disconcerting trend by the province to approve mining projects regardless of the obvious environmental and social impacts."

"The claims that the company will be bound by numerous conditions and that clear mitigating actions must be taken to protect the environment are not of great comfort to us at this point, given the poor track record in this province to date," said Chief Sam. "There are close to 2,000 abandoned or closed mines in BC and two third of them are still polluting the land and water."

TNG says it is still reviewing the report and considering its options for a more direct response. "We are hopeful that the federal review panel will take a more diligent and responsible approach to this proposed mine, and act as a safeguard for the public interest, rather than a rubber stamp for industry," said Chief Baptiste.

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