



TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

Tsilhqot'in Concerned about Mount Polley Discharge Permit

Williams Lake, BC (December 7, 2015): The Tsilhqot'in National Government (TNG) is concerned about the decision by the provincial government to approve a discharge permit for Mount Polley Mine.

Tailing discharge from Mount Polley Mine will be released into Quesnel Lake, which drains into the Fraser River, the same river that supports our salmon stocks as they migrate. Prior to the tailings being discharged, it does not meet water quality guidelines. This means that Quesnel Lake is being contaminated in a "dilution zone" in order to meet water quality guidelines. Any and all discharge should be treated to a level that meets guidelines *prior* to discharge. The current level of treatment does not achieve that.

TNG is sensitive to the need for employment opportunities in the region. However, the environment and jobs do not need to be mutually exclusive. All steps need to be taken to ensure that the environment is not further damaged, and that mine disasters such as Mount Polley and the Brazil disaster never happen again. This starts with holding the company to the highest standards: any and all effluent should meet the water quality standards at the *outlet*, not after dilution in Quesnel Lake.

Quotes:

Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman of the Tsilhqot'in National Government:

"The Tsilhqot'in leadership have been receiving many concerned phone calls about this permit. We would like to clarify that the Mount Polley project is in Northern Secwepemc territory, but the downstream effects of the dam breach and any effluent are felt by the Tsilhqot'in Nation. The breach already affected our fishing rights, with most of our families refusing to fish in 2014, and many chose not to fish again in 2015. This has had a significant negative impact on our people, our food, social and ceremonial right to fish. We are still waiting to see if the disaster will have a longterm detrimental effect on the smolts and rearing of salmon in Chilko Lake. The Tsilhqot'in are watching this permit closely, and will be re-assessing all options once long term impacts have been understood, with the first indication this coming summer when the smolts begin their migration to the ocean."

"The Chilko sockeye run is the healthiest run remaining in the Fraser River system and supports First Nations up and down the Fraser, as well as those we welcome into our territory to fish. We are proud of maintaining a healthy run but must be aware of threats that could damage such a sensitive population."

Chief Roger William, Vice-Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government:

"I'm very concerned with this permit, which allows discharge of effluent that does not meet BC Water Quality Guidelines prior to dilution. We do not know the full impacts of the disaster, our downstream waters or the smolts that could be impacted by the huge quantity of tailings that were released. This sets a bad example both on the national and international stage. The provincial approach to discharge needs to change before any long-term permits are issued. Regardless of political pressure, rigorous scientific

studies must be completed and communicated effectively in order for our people to trust decisions that may impact our food sources and ways of life.”

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