



T̓SILHQOT̓'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

253 – 4th Avenue North - Williams Lake, BC V2G 4T4 - Phone (250) 392-3918 - Fax (250) 398-5798

Media Release
April 1, 2019

T̓silhqot̓'in Nation Granted Injunction

Williams Lake, BC: The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation welcomes an injunction granted today by the B.C. Court of Appeal against an exploration permit issued by British Columbia to Taseko Mines Ltd. (TML) for an extensive drilling program in the Težtan Biny (Fish Lake) area.

The injunction prohibits TML from carrying out the drilling program until the Supreme Court of Canada decides whether to hear an appeal of British Columbia's decision to approve the drilling program. In oral reasons today, the B.C. Court of Appeal emphasized that this appeal could raise new and important issues of law, because it would be the first time the Supreme Court of Canada addressed the Crown's duties of consultation in the context of proven Aboriginal rights. The drilling program at issue in this appeal would have serious impacts in one of the only areas in Canada that is subject to a court declaration of proven, unceded Aboriginal rights to hunt, trap and trade.

Taseko's proposed drilling program is for the stated purpose of advancing construction of the New Prosperity Mine, despite the fact that the Federal Government rejected New Prosperity in February 2014, meaning the proposed mine cannot be built as matters stand. Two independent federal panels have confirmed the unique and special significance of Težtan Biny (Fish Lake), Yanah Biny (Little Fish Lake) and Nabas (the surrounding area) to the T̓silhqot̓'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, as "home" to the many T̓silhqot̓'in members born and raised there, and as the resting place of their ancestors.

The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation is cautiously relieved by the BC Court of Appeal's temporary protection of the given area from 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.

Quotes:

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

"The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation being granted this temporary stop to the drilling permit in the Težtan Biny area is a small victory when it comes to Indigenous rights in this country. Canada's current consultation and accommodation framework was established for First Nations who had yet to prove Aboriginal rights or title. We have both proven Aboriginal rights and proven Aboriginal title, therefore consultation must be above and beyond for our proven Aboriginal rights or it would be pointless for us to continue to utilize the Canadian court system. We are asking the Supreme Court of Canada to hear this appeal and affirm once and for all that proven Aboriginal rights must be taken seriously. Canadian courts have to recognize the *T̓silhqot̓'in Nation* judgment and give real meaning to the protection of Aboriginal rights or we are going to have discontent throughout Canada for resource extraction and relationships with First

Nations. We are relieved that Težtan Biny is now, temporarily, protected and the Supreme Court of Canada has the opportunity to hear this important appeal.”

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

"This is a high profile case given the Tšilhqot’in Nation's history with Taseko Mines Ltd. The BC Court of Appeal decision is welcomed as interim relief and we appreciate that the Courts understand the seriousness of this matter. It is still unfortunate that we, collectively, spend time and resources on exploration for a mine proposal that cannot proceed. As a Nation, we will continue to protect Težtan Biny, Nabas and the Dasiqox watershed."

Nits’il?in (Chief) Jimmy Lulua, Xeni Gwet’in First Nations Government:

“Our Elders and people travelled to the BC Court of Appeal to stand strong in the face of this direct threat to our culture, our sacred places and our Tšilhqot’in way of life. We will remain cautiously optimistic that there is justice in the Canadian court system and this temporary relief will lead to a full stop to this unacceptable drilling program. Mining companies like Taseko Mines Limited should be an example of how not to work with Indigenous people. Our people have spoken loud and clear that they don’t approve of any mine or drilling program that will damage or threaten our cultural way of living, fishing, hunting and practicing our spirituality. It simply cannot be acceptable to inflict this much damage in a place of such spiritual and cultural importance to our people, all in the name of a mine project that cannot and will not be built. We are calling on the Supreme Court of Canada to set this straight. It’s about time for Indigenous rights to be upheld in this country.”

Media Contact:

Myanna Desaulniers
Communication Manager
Tšilhqot’in National Government
250-305-7885