



## TŜILHQOT'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Tsilhqot'in Nation defends its lands and waters from Taseko Mines Ltd.**

#### **Nation fighting company's efforts to revive twice-rejected mine**

**Vancouver, BC (Coast Salish Territory):** January 30, 2017: The Tsilhqot'in Nation is in Federal Court in Vancouver this week to oppose an attempt by Taseko Mines Limited (TSX:TKO) (TML) to overturn the scathing 2014 federal rejection of TML's proposed New Prosperity Mine. In 2010 TML's initially proposed Prosperity Mine was also rejected. TML's proposal is for an open pit copper-gold mine where Tsilhqot'in have proven Aboriginal Rights and very near the Tsilhqot'in Declared Title Lands.

The TML case includes a constitutional challenge to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*. It argues that *CEAA 2012* goes too far in protecting the interests of Aboriginal peoples and that those protections should be struck down by the courts. In essence, the company is attempting to further reduce the protection of our already gutted federal environmental laws, particularly as they apply to Aboriginal people.

Incredibly, TML is also urgently seeking permits from the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines for a major drilling and exploration program to support construction of the twice rejected project.

"TML's permit application ignores all findings against the proposed mine; it is an insult to Tsilhqot'in and the rule of law" said Xení Gwet'in Chief Roger William, who was the plaintiff in the historic 2014 '*Tsilhqot'in Nation*' Supreme Court decision.

TML's actions come at a time when the mining industry appears to be interested in seeking a new way forward with First Nations. Rather than help this effort, the Tsilhqot'in warn the company is creating a black eye for the industry.

The court case begins this morning at the Federal Court building at 701 West Georgia Street. The Tsilhqot'in Nation is co-hosting fundraisers to support its court costs on Tuesday January 31 at 7pm at Wise Hall, 1882 Adanac Street in Vancouver; and on Wednesday February 1 at 7pm at St. John the Divine Church, 1611 Quadra Street in Victoria.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Chief Roger William, Chief of the Xení Gwet'in First Nation and Vice-Chair of the Tsilhqot'in National Government:**

"Our people have fought long and hard to protect our land and waters. We will continue to fulfill this sacred responsibility. We draw on our 1989 Nemiah Aboriginal Preserve Declaration and our 1990 Xení Gwet'in trap line court case that evolved into our landmark Supreme Court title declaration. After two federal rejections this company still tries to bulldoze ahead and cause destruction in our Territory. For the past decade we have opposed TML in the strongest terms and it is time they finally understand our position – simply stated, we do not consent."

**Chief Russell Myers Ross, Chief of Yunesit'in and Director of the Tsilhqot'in National Government:**

“In my opinion, TML has never shown honour or respect to the Tsilhqot'in Nation, and the current attempt to enter the Territory for a drilling program while the proposal has been rejected is an example of how unethically the company behaves. It is time to put this project to rest, permanently. Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) is a significant cultural area and in the headwaters of one of the most diverse ecosystems in Canada. The reason for developing Nexwagwez7an, the Dasiqox Tribal Park, is to give life to our value system and vision for the land - a contrast to TML that seeks to disturb the natural rhythm of life.”

**Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs:**

“The Union of BC Indian Chiefs is proud to continue standing beside the Tsilhqot'in Nation as they protect and defend their beautiful lands, sacred waters and Indigenous way of life. This is an arrogant and unrepentant company that has not learned its lesson, despite not one but two scathing federal rejections by the Harper Government, the most pro-industry and anti-First Nation government in memory. We will continue to completely support the Tsilhqot'in as they do what it takes to lay this this wretched, destructive and highly offensive mine proposal to rest, once and for all.”

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