



T̓SILHQOT̓'IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

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Media Release

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T̓silhqot̓'in Nation Challenges BC Approval to Increase Tailings Effluent into Fraser River

Williams Lake, BC: The T̓silhqot̓'in Nation filed a notice of application last week to the BC Environmental Appeal Board, challenging a decision by the Province that allows Gibraltar Mines Ltd. to increase by 50% the quantity of tailings effluent sent from their tailings pond direct to the Fraser River, without any sophisticated effluent treatment.

For many years, the T̓silhqot̓'in community of ̓Esdilagh and the T̓silhqot̓'in National Government have advocated for better effluent treatment at the mine, and a meaningful review of alternatives to simply dumping from a tailings pond to the Fraser River – the lifeblood of British Columbia.

The discharge was originally approved in 2006 and already subject to an appeal at that time. The effluent pipe dumps tailings effluent directly from the mine's pond into the Fraser River only 4km downstream from the community of ̓Esdilagh, which straddles the Fraser River. The effluent does not meet BC Water Quality Guidelines at the end of the pipe. Instead, the Fraser River is used as a source of dilution to meet the water quality guidelines downstream.

Quotes:

Nits'il̓'in (Chief) Roy Stump, ̓Esdilagh First Nation:

"̓Esdilagh First Nation land is steps away from Canada's second largest mine. We bear the impacts to our lands and waters, including our salmon, sturgeon and wildlife. The discharge to the ̓Elhdaqox (Fraser River), only a few kilometers downstream from where most of our members' live is located at one of our main traditional fishing sites, has been a source of deep concern to us since originally approved. The Provincial discharge permit to release effluent at full capacity does not respect our community's own laws about water. We are not opposed to this mine or economic development, but we do believe that discharging dirty mine effluent is not responsible mining. We would like to find a better solution and have asked this for many years – this is not difficult to do."

Nits'il̓'in (Chief) Francis Laceese, Tl'esqox First Nation:

"All British Columbians depend on the ̓Elhdaqox (Fraser River) for food, water and much more. Our salmon swim through those waters on their journey home to our Territory. Yet the Province allows it to be used as a sewer, to dilute mine waste just because a company is too cheap to build an effluent treatment plant. This is unacceptable in this day and age. A responsible company would not be forcing the rest of us to subsidize its waste disposal while jeopardizing our food and our water. Meanwhile, our salmon stocks, our steelhead, and our sturgeon are threatened on all fronts. We think it's no coincidence that since this discharge was originally approved, we have seen our salmon runs steadily decline and white sturgeon are being considered for a listing as an endangered species. Exposing our fish to this mine waste is unacceptable and needs to change."

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