

**SOURCE: Okanagan Nation Alliance**

**Oct 21, 2010 21:10 ET**

## **Okanagan Nation Supports Tsilhqot'in Nation & Reject Prosperity Mine**

### **Open Letter regarding Okanagan Nation's Support for Tsilhqot'in Nation and Call for the Federal Rejection of the Proposed Prosperity Mine**

Attention: Assignment Editor, Environment Editor, Energy Editor, News Editor, Government/Political Affairs Editor  
KELOWNA, BC, NEWS RELEASE--(Marketwire - Oct. 21, 2010) - Hon. Gail Shea  
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
Hon. Jim Prentice  
Minister of Environment

Hon. Christian Paradis  
Minister of Natural Resources

Hon. John Duncan  
Minister of Indian Affairs

Premier Gordon Campbell  
Government of British Columbia

VIA FACSIMILE AND POST

RE: Open Letter regarding Okanagan Nation's Support for Tsilhqot'in Nation and Call for the Federal Rejection of the Proposed Prosperity Mine

Dear Honourable Ministers, Premier Campbell and Cabinet:

We are writing to you with respect to Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) Resolution No. 213 which expresses support for Tsilhqot'in Nation and calls for Federal Cabinet rejection of the Proposed Prosperity Mine. This resolution was endorsed unanimously at the ONA Chief and Councils Quarterly Meeting on October 21, 2010.

We are writing to reiterate once again the Okanagan Nation takes this opportunity to express our strong unwavering support for the Tsilhqot'in Nation's rejection of Taseko Mine Ltd's proposed Prosperity Mine. We fully and completely support the resolute determination and absolute right of the Tsilhqot'in to protect their lands which hold profound cultural and spiritual value. We shall not stand idly by and silently witness the obliteration and destruction Teztan Biny (Fish Lake). The Okanagan Nation member Chiefs and Councils will stand in complete solidarity with the Tsilhqot'in and Northern Shuswap peoples in the defense of their homelands.

We call on you and your governments to heed the cautions of the independent environmental review panel. Further, we urge you to demonstrate your commitment to environmental protection. More importantly we advise you to uphold your fiduciary and jurisdictional responsibilities to safeguard the cultural integrity and survival of Indigenous peoples, as expressed both by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and as expressed in the Canadian Constitution of 1982. As representatives of Canada you must reject the proposed Prosperity Mine that will result in the complete eradication and destruction of the Teztan Biny (Fish Lake).

Additionally, we want to advise you that this action is being closely monitored by all Indigenous peoples in Canada as well as Internationally. There is only one acceptable and reasonable resolution, and that is the rejection of this environmental destructive proposal to establish the Taseko Mine Ltd's proposed Prosperity Mine.

Please contact the Okanagan Nation Alliance Executive Director, Pauline Terbasket for any further information at 250.707.0095 or email: [director@syilx.org](mailto:director@syilx.org).

Sincerely,

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip  
Chairman

Attach. Okanagan Nation Tribal Council Resolution No. 213

cc:  
Tsilhqot'in National Government  
Okanagan Nation Chief's and Council Members  
Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation  
The First Nations Summit Political Council

Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Chiefs Council  
The BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief

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TRIBAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
2010-2011 No. 213

SUPPORT FOR TSILHQOT'IN NATION AND CALL FOR FEDERAL REJECTION OF THE PROPOSED PROSPERITY MINE  
October 21st, 2010

WHEREAS: The Okanagan Nation has un-extinguished Aboriginal title, jurisdiction and rights to all Syilx territory; and,

WHEREAS: As a unified Okanagan Nation, we continue to affirm our mandate to advocate, practice and preserve the culture, language, natural resources and title and rights of the Syilx Peoples; and,

WHEREAS: The Okanagan Nation and member Bands recognizes the un-extinguished Aboriginal title, jurisdiction and rights of the Tsilhqot'in people; and,

WHEREAS: The Okanagan Nation opposes the proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine (the "Project") because it requires the complete destruction of Teztan Biny (Fish Lake), a traditional fishery and ceremonial site that has sustained the Tsilhqot'in people for generations, in an area where the Tsilhqot'in people hold proven Aboriginal hunting and trapping rights; and,

WHEREAS: The Okanagan Nation Alliance Chief's and Council members are participating members of the Union of BC Indian Chief (UBCIC) supports UBCIC Resolution No. 2010-03 and Resolution No. 2010-32, recognizing the Tsilhqot'in Nation's opposition to the Project; and,

WHEREAS: The forenamed Resolutions supports all Indigenous people who take Action to defend and protect the sacred waters and health of their Territories; and,

WHEREAS: Entire communities of the Tsilhqot'in people attended the public hearings held by the federal panel (the "Panel") conducting the environmental assessment of the Project, and Tsilhqot'in members from as young as 7 to as old as 90 explained the cultural and spiritual importance of these lands and waters to the Panel; and,

WHEREAS: The Independent Panel concluded that "the Project" would result in significant adverse environmental effects on fish and fish habitat, on navigation, on the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by First Nations and on cultural heritage, and on certain potential or established Aboriginal Title or Rights and on threatened grizzly bear populations; and,

WHEREAS: The Panel specifically concluded that the mine would permanently destroy lands and waters described as an "important cultural and spiritual area" for the Tsilhqot'in people, "an important teaching environment for Tsilhqot'in youth;" an important source of fish for their "sustenance" and "a place of spiritual power and healing for the Tsilhqot'in"; and,

WHEREAS: The UBCIC further warned that "the loss of the Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) and Nabas areas for current use activities, ceremonies, teaching, and cultural and spiritual practices would be irreversible, of high magnitude and have a long-term effect on the Tsilhqot'in" and these "impacts on the physical and mental health of the Tsilhqot'in communities would be long term"; and,

WHEREAS: Although the Panel provided recommendations to the Government should the Project proceed, it explicitly cautioned that "it does not believe that these recommendations would eliminate or accommodate the significant loss First Nations would experience...;" and,

WHEREAS: The decision to approve or reject the Project is now in the hands of Federal Cabinet, and there is heavy lobbying by the Government of British Columbia, the mining industry and others for the approval of the Project notwithstanding that these are the most dire warnings of environmental and cultural damage that a federal Panel has ever issued; and,

WHEREAS: The Okanagan Nation has consistently voiced strong and unwavering support for the Tsilhqot'in in opposition to the "Project", through attendance at the Panel, and public advocacy; and provided on-the-ground support both on Tsilhqot'in territory and through lobbying in Ottawa; and,

WHEREAS: First Nations across Canada are directed by the courts and the governments to participate in environmental assessment processes to raise concerns about development, often despite strong misgivings about whether these concerns will be properly heard or weighed in these processes, as recognized by the UBCIC Resolution No. 2010-03 and Resolution No. 2010-32; and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: The Okanagan Nation Alliance Chief's Executive Council fully support the efforts of the Tsilhqot'in Nation to protect their lands of profound cultural and spiritual value to its peoples from the proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine, and will stand behind the Tsilhqot'in Nation in defence of these lands regardless of the decision made by the Federal Government; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Okanagan Nation Alliance Chief's Executive Council call upon the Federal Government to heed the cautions of its independent Panel, demonstrate commitment to environmental protection and

the cultural survival of First Nations, and reject the proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Okanagan Nation Alliance Chief's Executive Council advise the Federal Government that First Nations across Canada are watching its decision to see whether there remains any value or integrity in environmental assessments for major projects, or whether First Nations must turn to litigation and other means to assert our rights and protect our cultures; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Okanagan Nation Chief's Executive Council caution the Federal Government that approval of the proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine, despite clear warnings of its independent Panel, would demonstrate utter disregard for the survival of First Nations as distinctive cultures within Canada; and,

FURTHER BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Okanagan Nation Chief's Executive Council direct the Executive to advocate on behalf of the Tsilhqot'in Nation and communicate the clear support of the Okanagan Nation Chiefs Executive Council; and,

FINALLY BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: The Okanagan Nation Chief's Executive Council directs the Executive and staff to continue working with like-minded organizations in support of the Tsilhqot'in Nation in opposition to the proposed Prosperity Gold-Copper Mine.

IN: ENVIRONMENT, MINING, POLITICS

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Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Chair  
Primary Phone: 250-430-5314

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