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## Nelson, Wolbers are right to push for Prosperity

Good for Mayor Scott Nelson and city council making an effort to help light a fire under the provincial and federal government to define an environmental assessment process for the Prosperity Project. Nelson's and Jon Wolbers' trip to Victoria to see ministers Penner and Neufeld is a trip worth taking, and Nelson is right to have a sense of urgency.

Right now, according to **Taseko** Mine's Brian Battison, "the stars are aligned" for the project. In an industry like mining, so many things have to come together at the same time to make a new mine viable - financing, community support, commodity prices, the economy, regulation, and more.

And right now is the time to make sure the process continues along. There's no guarantee the project will be successful in the environmental assessment or that First Nations and other communities will support the project — though we think the project will be successful and should be supported — but that all becomes moot if, while governments are deliberating over the form the process will take, one or more of those stars falls out of alignment.

It's not inconceivable, Battison says, that one month's delay could push back the construction date by a year.

Nelson says Prosperity is a key project to diversify and strengthen the region's economy. We'd go farther - right now, Prosperity is the project to do that, and a new comparative analysis makes that perfectly clear.

**Taseko** has long used numbers like capital investment of \$800 million over the life of the project, 550 direct full-time jobs and 1,280 indirect jobs annually over 22 years. Those are impressive in and of themselves.

But the new comparisons put Prosperity's importance in more context. They found that Prosperity would contribute \$340 million annually in

GDP, more than the province's film and TV industry in 2006 (\$300 million); the province's 2006 cattle production (\$206 million); and B.C.'s commercial fishery and seafood processing industry combined (\$260 million).

Prosperity alone, if it were in production now, would offset the slowdown in the province's growth caused by the high dollar and the weak American economy.

And the stars are aligned for Williams Lake, as well. We are a community suffering due to the pine beetle, a community that needs to diversify its economy, a community that could greatly benefit from an influx of workers, and the economic and social spinoffs they would bring - retail spending, taxes, and volunteerism among them. Williams Lake is the perfect community to benefit from Prosperity. Prosperity can continue its work to open a mine in the Nemiah Valley if the provincial and federal governments will let **Taseko** know what the environmental assessment process.

It would be a horrible shame to see Prosperity deep-sixed due to government delay. Prosperity has been asking for the process since January.

It would be one thing for the project to be called off due to commodity prices or another variable. But it will be inexcusable if it's sunk because of delay in Victoria or Ottawa.

We hope Nelson and Wolbers will communicate that to the ministers for the community.