

Williams Lake Tribune

Prosperity will be reviewed

By Ken MacInnis - Williams Lake Tribune

Published: July 08, 2008 8:00 AM

Public examination phase could be this winter

The environmental assessment review process for the proposed Prosperity gold and copper mine at Fish Lake will be moving forward, Taseko Mines announced Monday.

The company has been waiting for a decision about what form the EA process would take since February.

“This is good news,” says Taseko Mines vice-president of corporate affairs Brian Battison. “This will be a province-led environmental review. The province is asserting its rights and responsibilities over provincial assets.

“We interpret that to mean that the provincial government recognizes this is an important project for Williams Lake and for the people of B.C.”

When built, Prosperity would create 500 full-time jobs, 1,280 indirect jobs, and would spend \$200 million every year for the 22-year life of the mine.

Prosperity would add 0.3 to 0.5 per cent to the provincial gross domestic product (GDP), which is three times the entire commercial fishing industry, and larger than the province’s film and television industry.

Taseko has been and is working to be in a position to submit its EA report on Aug. 1 this year, Battison says.

The province has established timelines throughout the process, which will examine the project’s economic, social, and environmental impacts and benefits.

Battison says, if done efficiently, the process should be completed by May 1 next year, when Taseko will make a decision whether to go ahead with the project.

He estimated the public examination phase will mean opportunities for public input early this winter.

In general, the environmental assessment includes four main elements:

- Opportunities for all interested parties, including First Nations, to identify issues and provide input;
- Technical studies of the relevant environmental, social, economic, heritage and/or health effects of the proposed project;
- Identification of ways to prevent or minimize undesirable effects and enhance desirable effects; and
- Consideration of the input of all interested parties in compiling the assessment findings and making decisions about project acceptability.

If approval is given and the company decides to go ahead, construction of the mine will take two years.

“This is fantastic news,” Mayor Scott Nelson said of the announcement. He, Cariboo Regional District chair Jon Wolbers, and Cariboo South MLA Charlie Wyse have all endorsed the project.

“The local support has been tremendously encouraging,” Battison says.

This future mine is very important to South-Central British Columbia which is dealing with the economic fallout from the pine beetle destruction of our forests,” says Taseko Mines president and CEO Russell Hallbauer.

“We urge the government to expedite this environmental assessment in a timely manner so we can move forward and provide similar benefits to the Cariboo from Prosperity as we presently contribute from our Gibraltar Mine.”