

Submission for fortune minerals hearing, October 10,11, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Richard Edjericon, and the MVEIRB board

I am sending this letter to represent myself, my family and future generations that will be living here, I have a few concerns that I want to make note of. To date the people living here in Behchoko have not been represented well at all, in these meetings. I hear elected people here talking about their concerns on the land and not for the public interest living here, but how it affects them personally. We have over two thousand people living here in this community and we have not had any public meetings regarding what we as citizens of Behchoko may think of this project. I think there is a problem here, who is taking care of our interest, and if it is these elected members here, then they have not consulted with us. Behchoko is the largest Tlicho community and the most affected and you give us a few hours to speak. This was a long process, The Tlicho government and fortune minerals could have come into our community and asked us what we thought, Fortune minerals did in 2008, is this written in your documents? Are the comments we made then, somewhere in the boards information packages, will it be used? If not I would have to say, some one somewhere, is out some good info. Another good example is the other active mining activities on our lands, I hear now that it is happening, but only because I was here at the hearings

1. Water is the most important thing to us here in Behchoko; we cannot afford to have it contaminated. I understand what fortune says about how it will be safe, but there are other areas of concern, when it comes to development. Water treatment in this community can be affected and may be irreversible when it happens to get contaminated. To this I say Behchoko has to have its own impact and benefits agreement, and have fortune put a security deposit for emergency relocation of water intake, water delivery and bottled water source, because we do have the best water in North America. Water monitoring has to be done by Behchoko and not Tlicho government or their consultants, as we in Behchoko are the only ones that will suffer from any contamination.

2. The winter roads are too close to us for any comfort at all, if there is going to be increased traffic on it, and there is a potential for disaster, and this would be from trucks breaking through ice, or fuel spills and even ore that may have minerals we don't know about. Future plans for the road access to fortune minerals has to be moved away as far as possible from this community so that any accidents that happen can be cleaned up before it can reach our drinking water source here in Behchoko. In addition the fish we eat for our regular diet will be negatively impacted and there has to be a way to make sure they are also protected. Mining road on Tlicho land must take the most direct route to outside of Tlicho lands and as far away from Behchoko as possible but at a reasonable distance. There are old plans of all weather roads which can be used for the all land winter road alignment to highway #3.
  
3. Wildlife and their food source can also be affected negatively by the waste water from the wetlands treatment and tailings piles. The wildlife can feed on plants in the wetlands area, which have been naturally treated but are left behind in the plants and taken up by the roots. I am told that plants are amazing and can bring chemicals to the surface through its roots, so if there is a chance that there is going to be wetland treatment, then there has to be a way of protecting our wildlife. The use of fencing around waste and wetlands should be used for the long term future plans if the waste is contaminated in any way, maybe from natural makeup of chemicals or failure of treatment.
  
4. Hunting restrictions on mining roads and public winter roads is against our hunting rights and our treaty rights have to be respected by everyone. Hunting restrictions should only be in place within the mining footprint and a certain area surrounding it only for safety purposes.

5. Traditional knowledge is a good thing, as long as the history is accurate and not changed just for the benefit of those who are seeking to hold back development or to create new employment or for personal benefits. For more than twenty years traditional knowledge has been gathered, where is it today? Why do we have to create traditional knowledge on every project or on political issues, when we should be able to produce documents and audios of elders and great leaders of yesterday? I have watched history change before my eyes in the last twenty years, and it is because we let other people do our own work for us, when we should be doing it ourselves. I agree traditional knowledge has a part to play in our schools and can be part of development, but the present and the future is more important to us here in Behchoko when deciding on such an important issue like fortune minerals, any new mines up river of us.
  
6. Finally the last thing I want to say regarding the project is that, there was no person with authority representing the Behchoko public and the Community Government here, the Behchoko chief is representing the Tliche government. By rights there should have been another table set up for the Community Government of Behchoko as they have their own Local Government. The people here in Behchoko are going to be the most impacted, not the North slave Métis, Yellowknives, Wekweeti, Gameti or even Whati, if there is an environmental disaster that happens on the land, up river or even on our Lake out front, it is going to impacted us the most.

I would like to add that the hearing was very well chaired and the board staff and legal consultants did very good in their line of questioning, but I also seen a side of some staff and board members, that were asking leading questions or suggestive comments and trying to get certain answers. If the groups cannot answer the questions then it should be left at that, not answered, and considered as such. This was a very important hearing to us here in Behchoko and we the public were not able to ask questions of the mines or even of our elected chiefs and other groups on their presentations.

The questions asked by the firelight group of consultants and other consultants should also be recorded and identified as the firelight group or as individuals and not as Tlicho reps, they were there as consultants and not staff or elected members, I really had a problem with that. When the consultants for Fortune Minerals answered questions, they identified themselves as consultants. I also seen a lot of confusion when questions were asked of the Tlicho government and the consultants answering questions after huddling amongst themselves without the elected chiefs having input, this make me wonder who they are representing, and how do they know the questions are what the Tlicho people want. When a certain consultant was asked who and how many would be doing the monitoring she said professional people like her would be needed. Should the questions and answers put forward by the consultants without the input of the elected chiefs be considered as coming from the Tlicho people or from the consultants?

A lot of people stood up with similar reasons, but with the wrong information given to them, I seen youth and others standing up with prepared documents and speaking about past mining practices and sickness caused by it, which may or may not be true of past unmonitored developments. Past destruction of our lands and history cannot be repeated if we don't allow it, and we all know that, even John B Zoe the Tlicho consultant said it at one time, he said (we have to adapt to the future, and the Tlicho have adapted), I agree we have, and we will continue to adapt and we have to be part of future developments at all stages. If the board approves any mines upriver of us, Behchoko has to have the largest role in the fish and water monitoring

Thank you for listening to me at the hearing and also for considering my recommendations.

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