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We want Prosperity

The proposed mine for Fish Lake is aptly named.

If **Taseko** Mines's copper and gold open pit mine does proceed, it will indeed bring Prosperity to the region.

With capital investment of \$800 million, more than \$4 billion in spending, more than 500 and 1,000 direct and indirect jobs over 22 years, the mine can be a great thing for the region.

And not just for miners.

The proposed project would include a mining camp, more like a hotel than a tent city, with food, laundry, and entertainment services. That will require cooks, housekeepers, security, and a host of other workers.

Williams Lake is the closest accessible urban centre, and its businesses and people stand to benefit enormously from the project and its employees. Williams Lake is where workers will most likely live, pay taxes, and spend their money.

The project is not without its potential pitfalls, but **Taseko** has plans in the works to mitigate them,

The fish in Fish Lake will be moved to another location, and the lake itself will become a tailings pond. **Taseko** proposes to replace the lake with another, larger, fish-sustaining lake, and fully reclaim the area.

The proposed site is on native traditional lands, and the First Nations must be consulted, and must agree to the project. **Taseko** managers spent the last week in First Nations communities to explain the project, and that is a good first step.

Even better is their insistence that the project will not go ahead without support from both affected First Nations communities and the public at large.

Hence the information meetings this weekend, which were informative, and most importantly, free of any spin. **Taseko** general manager of project development Scott Jones didn't mince any words: Fish Lake will be lost, there will be a large transmission line to the site, material from the mine will be treated with chemicals, and there are several impact factors still being studied.

And we were pleased with the hard, thoughtful questions to Jones and the consultants available.

The company is working on its submission for the federal and provincial governments to begin the Environment Assessment process, where the project will be scrutinized not just by regulators, but by the public. **Taseko** doesn't just have to show it can minimize the impacts of the mine on wildlife and water, but show how the mine will impact people and communities as well. The EA process is rigorous, and even after a certificate is issued, the company then must secure all the permits it needs, and constantly monitor the project,, even after the 22-year life of the mine is over.

Perhaps even more reassuringly, the company must post a bond, like a damage deposit, for mine reclamation. So in the event the company goes bankrupt or halts operations, the money to reclaim the land is already there. As Jones said, **Taseko** cannot just walk away from the mine without cleaning it up.

Part of the EA process measures the opportunities for First Nations and other communities to identify issues and provide input, and consideration of the input of all interested parties.

The mine needs public support to proceed, and we should give it, after and if our concerns have been addressed to our satisfaction.

With the pine beetle epidemic only getting worse, this is a tremendous opportunity to diversify the economy as we add dollars to it.