

TAHLTAN NATION APPROVES OF NORTHWEST TRANSMISSION LINE AGREEMENTS IN HISTORIC VOTE

Dease Lake, BC: Members of the Tahltan Nation voted 82 percent in favour of the Northwest Transmission Line agreements the Nation reached with BC Hydro and the BC Government in a historic decision that will shape the future of the Nation and its people. More than 1,700 Tahltans registered to vote and more than 770 of eligible voters of Tahltan ancestry 18 years of age and older turned out to vote, achieving a 45 percent participation rate.

“This is an exciting and pivotal time for our Nation. We are pleased the majority of Tahltans support the agreements our leadership team worked hard to achieve in the best interests of our people and our Nation,” says Annita McPhee Tribal Chair of the Tahltan Central Council. “This historical decision has come after months of substantial outreach with Tahltan members across the province, in Whitehorse and Alberta, and the agreements we reached reflect the input they provided.”

In response to member feedback, the Tahltan leadership worked to ensure the Tahltan Nation benefits economically and financially, receives meaningful benefits from the NTL and associated developments, impacts are managed and minimized during and after construction, and the Tahltan are in partnership with the Province to shape the future of the Tahltan territory and community.

“The agreements will enable us to foster social, cultural, economic and environmental health within our community,” says McPhee. “It will be a delicate balance to manage economic development and maximize the benefits to our people, while also protecting our culture and way of life and minimizing impacts to our land. But it is a commitment we have made to our people and one that we are confident we can deliver on.”

The Impacts Benefits Agreement with BC Hydro addresses the direct impacts from construction of the approximately 70 kilometres of transmission line within Tahltan territory, as well as provides benefits to the Tahltan in the form of cash and direct training, employment and sub-contracting opportunities. The Tahltan Central Council expects the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation, the Nation’s business arm, and other Tahltan businesses will be directly involved in transmission line construction.

The Government-to-Government Framework Agreement outlines a partnership between the Tahltan and the Province of BC that is intended to collaboratively shape development of the Tahltan territory and Tahltan community in the future beyond the NTL. The agreement addresses four topic areas: shared decision making for lands and resources within Tahltan territory; resource revenue sharing of direct provincial revenues for mining, tourism, independent power, forestry and other potential projects within Tahltan territory; addressing social and cultural changes to the Tahltan community; and collaborative planning of the energy sector within Tahltan territory.

The agreements also commit the Tahltan and the Province to a series of tasks and further negotiations that will implement the commitments outlined in the agreement.

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Rick McLean, chief of the Tahltan Band Council is also optimistic about the opportunities for the future for the Tahltan Nation. “I am confident the Tahltan leadership negotiated agreements for our Nation that reflect our members’ input, and that provide a gateway to a future that enables our Nation and people to prosper, while also protecting our culture and way of life.”

Marie Quock, chief of the Iskut Band Council agrees. “These agreements will ensure Tahltans participate in the decisions on our territory and manage development that respects our values. This vote says our people are willing to participate in this process, to ensure we benefit for current and future generations.”

The 287-kilovolt (kV), 344 km line will connect BC Hydro’s Skeena Substation near Terrace with a new substation to be built near Bob Quinn Lake, passing through the territory of other First Nations as well.

“Implementation of the NTL agreements is a complex task that will take time and commitment. The Province, through the BC cabinet, has formalized its commitment to this unprecedented partnership. The Tahltan will remain focussed to ensure the commitments are met for the benefit of all Tahltans for generations to come.”

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About the Tahltan Nation

The Tahltan Nation includes on and off-reserve Tahltans living in Telegraph Creek, Dease Lake and Iskut, and more than 3,000 people living across the country. Tahltan traditional territory encompasses 11 per cent of British Columbia. More than 50 per cent of all mineral exploration and mine development in the province takes place in Tahltan traditional territory. For more information about the Tahltan Central Council, visit www.tahltan.org.

About the Tahltan Central Council

The Tahltan Central Council exists to define and protect Tahltan inherent Aboriginal rights and title, to protect the eco-systems and natural resources of Tahltan traditional territory through pursuing sustainable economic development, and to strengthen the cultural wellness of the Tahltan Community by promoting traditional values based on the concepts of caring, sharing, cooperation, truth, honour, fairness and above all, respect.

