



Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs Deeply Concerned About National Energy Board's Decision

MEDIA RELEASE: Wet'suwet'en *Yintah*, Gitdumden Clan: Smithers, BC

December 14, 2018 – The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs are deeply concerned about the National Energy Board's decision this week denying the Office of the Wet'suwet'en's request to participate in a jurisdictional challenge to permits issued for TransCanada's Coastal GasLink pipeline project which, if built, will cross Wet'suwet'en House territories. Wet'suwet'en *dini ze'* & *ts'akë ze'* (male and female hereditary chiefs) have been opposed to the project for years.

"They said we wouldn't be impacted by their determination of the jurisdictional issue and also that we didn't have information which would be helpful for them," said *Dini ze' Na'moks* (John Ridsdale). "Our 18-page submission to the National Energy Board set out very clearly how we would be significantly impacted not only by the pipeline, but by the board's decision on the jurisdictional issue itself. We also told them very clearly about the unique perspective we could bring to that issue. They just chose not to hear us."

Hereditary Chief *Na'moks'* comments relate to the NEB's consideration of whether TransCanada's project, a 670 kilometer liquefied natural gas pipeline to go from Dawson Creek to Kitimat, falls under provincial or federal jurisdiction. If it is in federal jurisdiction, permits issued for the project by BC's Oil and Gas Commission may be determined to be legally invalid or the company may need additional federal permits. In October, the NEB received requests from many parties requesting official standing to make submissions on the jurisdiction issue. Earlier this week the NEB denied standing to the Office of the Wet'suwet'en.

“Look at who got standing,” said *Dinī ze’ Na’moks*. “Aside from one environmental organization, it’s just companies connected to the project, large pipeline and drilling companies, and several provinces. How can the NEB say that those companies and governments will be impacted by the jurisdictional issue and have something to say, but not the Wet’suwet’en Chiefs? We, too, are a government with our own jurisdiction. And we, too, have an important and valuable perspective to offer the NEB.”

The NEB’s decision comes after several approvals of major pipeline projects, despite the active opposition and lack of consent by Indigenous peoples. These include Kinder Morgan’s Trans Mountain Expansion Project, Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline, and TransCanada’s Energy East pipeline.

The Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs have never consented to the Coastal GasLink pipeline project and been actively opposed to it since its inception. The project will threaten Wet’suwet’en territories, society, culture, governance system, and the stewardship responsibilities of the Chiefs.

“Since the beginning, we’ve been opposed,” said *Dinī ze’ Na’Moks*, “and we’ve consistently felt that we’ve not been heard. This intervenor application denial by the National Energy Board is yet another example of that, but it does show that we are still submitting our concerns.” *Dinī ze’ Na’Moks* continued by pointing to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the courts’ repeated statements about reconciliation, and the increasing recognition by the Canadian legal system of Wet’suwet’en society and law. “These are all positive signs, but the Crown is still not really listening in meaningful ways or taking Wet’suwet’en laws and society into account.”

The Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs will continue to oppose the project and make their concerns heard. They are also considering having the decision reviewed or appealed.

For further comment, contact:

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