

Ahead of Divorce, Norilsk Nickel CEO Donates Large Chunk of His Fortune to Charity

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian tycoon Vladimir Potanin has given most of his assets to charity, minus the money he has kept for his children, his spokesman told Kommersant.

The announcement was made on Thursday, just weeks before a court is due to hear a divorce application from Potanin, 52, whose personal wealth is estimated at \$14.3 billion. He controls the Interros investment vehicle and is CEO and major shareholder of the world's largest nickel and palladium miner, Norilsk Nickel.

He has three children. He filed for divorce from his wife Natalya in December at the Presnensky District Magistrate Court in Moscow, stating that the spousal relationship had effectively ceased and that they lived separate lives with no shared assets.

The court granted an application from Potanin's lawyers, citing a right to privacy,

for proceedings to be closed to the media, despite objections from the defendant. The hearing was set for Feb. 25.

Natalya Potanina has denied that the marital relationship ended in January 2007, adding that it was during this period that her husband became secretive about his business.

Her lawyer, Filipp Ryabchenko, said that she may "file a claim for a division of jointly acquired assets and also contest a number of deals" made by her husband.

He added that they were searching for the billionaire's assets around the world and suspected that the bulk of them had been hidden "under the corporate veil."

"We want to establish what assets he has divested, if any, and to whom, if it was done for philanthropic reasons or because he wanted to hide his wealth from his wife, creditors or the state in a tax optimization attempt," Ryabchenko said.

Potanin made international headlines in October 2013, when he bought a rare 1.8-kilogram white truffle from a New York restaurateur for \$95,000.

In 2013, Potanin joined the Giving Pledge program organized by Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, promising to donate at least half of his wealth to charity causes. He claimed that his family supported his decision.

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