

Minister's Reasons for Decision

WITH RESPECT TO AN APPLICATION FOR AN AMENDMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CERTIFICATE FOR THE RED CHRIS MINE

JUNE 18, 2026



EAO

Environmental
Assessment Office

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE DECISION

On May 27, 2026, the Chief Executive Assessment Officer (CEAO) referred Newcrest Red Chris Mining Ltd. (NRCML)'s application to amend Environmental Assessment Certificate #M05-02 (Amendment) under Section 32(1) of the *Environmental Assessment Act*, S.B.C. 2018, c.51 (the Act) to myself for decision. I, the Honourable Tamara Davidson Minister of Environment and Parks, am the Provincial decision maker for the Amendment. The Amendment, referred to as the Block Cave Project, seeks to transition the existing Red Chris Porphyry Copper-Gold Mine (Red Chris) from open pit to underground mining using block caving techniques.

Red Chris is located approximately 18 kilometres southeast of the community of Iskut, British Columbia. Red Chris was issued an environmental assessment certificate as an open pit copper and gold mine in 2005 and has been in operations since 2015. The mine is located within the territory of the Tahltan Nation, represented by Tahltan Central Government (TCG). NRCML has communicated that the Block Cave Project would allow the access of higher-grade ore below the permitted open pit shell and improve extraction efficiency. If approved, the Block Cave Project would require the development of underground infrastructure and an expansion of the existing processing plant to support an increased processing capacity of up to 15 million tonnes per annum of ore. The work camp capacity would be expanded to accommodate up to 1,500 workers (from 1,200) and ancillary infrastructure would be constructed and upgraded. There would be an increase in traffic associated with the Block Cave Project – along the same route as the existing operations between the mine site and port facilities in Stewart along Highway 37 and 37A – which passes through the Treaty areas of the Nisga'a Nation and the asserted territories of the Gitanyow Nation and Tssetsaut Skii km Lax. It is my understanding that the assessment process for the Amendment was co-designed by the EAO and TCG to have similar steps as a full environmental assessment, in consideration of the complexity of the Amendment.

The Province and TCG signed a consent-based decision-making agreement (the Declaration Act Agreement) under the Province's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act)* in 2023 and – as a substantial change to the existing mine – the Block Cave Project requires consent from the TCG for it to proceed.

The CEAO provided the following materials for my consideration:

- The EAO's Amendment Assessment Report that considers all required matters under [Section 25 of the Act](#);
- A draft Amendment Order, with a Certified Project Description and Table of Conditions;
- Recommendations of the CEAO that the Amendment to the Certificate be issued, having concluded that the matters in Section 25 have been assessed sufficiently;
- The Tahltan Risk Assessment Report, authored by TCG, which provides conclusions on potential effects and/or cumulative effects on Tahltan Values and Tahltan Aboriginal rights; and
- The Tahltan Notice of Decision, dated May 22, 2026, pursuant to the Declaration Act Agreement.

MINISTER'S CONSIDERATIONS

To make my decision, I considered the following:

- All materials provided by the CEAO, as noted above, including the findings of the EAO's assessment with respect to the effects of the Block Cave Project and the CEAO's recommendation that the Amendment to the Certificate be issued; and
- The Tahltan Notice of Decision, indicating the TCG Board of Directors' consent to the Block Cave Project proceeding, subject to conditions outlined in their Notice.

Recommendations of the Chief Executive Assessment Officer

The CEAO advised me that, after considering the EAO's Amendment Assessment Report and other materials, they were satisfied that the proposed Amendment conditions and Certified Project Description would prevent or reduce potential adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural and health effects, such that no significant adverse residual effects or cumulative effects are expected from the Block Cave Project.

The CEAO proposed 27 conditions. I note that eleven of those are overarching conditions designed to ensure clear and robust oversight of the amended Certificate and are consistent with the EAO's current standards for certificates. I understand that sixteen Project-specific conditions are proposed to prevent or reduce adverse effects of the Block Cave Project itself, 12 of which were developed collaboratively by the EAO and TCG to address issues that were identified in the Amendment Assessment Report and Tahltan Risk Assessment.

I have considered the information provided and understand that, through the environmental assessment, key issues raised by Indigenous nations, the public, and provincial technical advisors were taken into account, including in the development of new and updated regulatory requirements. I acknowledge that NCRML submitted applications to amend provincial permits concurrently with the environmental assessment, and that the EAO worked with TCG and provincial agencies to coordinate all technical reviews, identify the most effective resolution pathways for significant technical issues, and reduce duplicative regulatory requirements where possible and appropriate.

With respect to the Amendment conditions, I understand that they are proposed to, among other things:

- Establish criteria for how NRCML must work collaboratively with the TCG when preparing project-related documents;
- Define how project documents must meet Tahltan Satisfaction and outline a process to resolve any outstanding concerns;
- Require NRCML to report out on the project's progress in aligning with Tahltan Sustainability Requirements and Tahltan Core Priorities;
- Ensure the public has access to project information and ways to provide feedback;
- Monitor and mitigate air quality impacts;
- Verify whether predicted impacts on water quality and quantity from the amendment application are accurate and establish contingencies for additional mitigation measures;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of seepage source control and mitigation measures;
- Evaluate the potential for high streamflow during Closure and Post-Closure phases;
- Require hydrogeologic field investigations and groundwater monitoring to determine presence of hydraulic connectivity in Kluea Lake;
- Develop plans and reports on closure and reclamation that integrate Tahltan Sustainability Requirements and Tahltan Core Priorities;
- Verify predicted subsidence and ground stability from the Amendment application and monitor over time;
- Require traffic management and monitoring along key highways to avoid and reduce impacts on wildlife and road users along the transportation route;
- Require a wildlife metal-uptake monitoring program;
- Establish programs to monitor and mitigate potential biophysical effects to Tahltan health;

- Require NRCML to provide information related to the social and health services accessed and provided by NRCML and how these will change at Closure to assist in Post-Closure planning;
- Require NRCML to participate in relevant provincial and Tahltan regional initiatives; and,
- Require NRCML to regularly report results of environmental monitoring to Tahltan community members in an accessible manner.

I understand that technical review of required provincial permits occurred in coordination with the environmental assessment, and that the materials I have been provided reflect the extensive coordination between provincial agencies and TCG to identify the necessary authorizations, mitigations and best-placed regulator to establish conditions to address effects of the Block Cave Project. This approach ensured that important technical issues could be resolved by the most appropriate agency, reduced duplicative regulatory requirements, and will support comprehensive compliance oversight of mine operations.

I am aware that permit amendment applications under the *Mines Act* and the *Environmental Management Act* have been referred to the respective statutory decision makers, and that amendments contemplate substantial new and revised requirements on the permittee. As per Section 8 of the Act, those statutory decision makers may not make their decisions on permit amendments prior to my decision on whether to issue the Amendment for the Block Cave Project.

First Nation Engagement and Consultation

As part of my decision-making, I carefully considered the perspectives of First Nations, including the issues raised during the EAO's consultation throughout the assessment. I appreciate the extensive efforts made by First Nations, the EAO, and other provincial agencies to identify issues and concerns and to seek consensus on their resolution, the Amendment Assessment Report and proposed conditions. I can see that this work reflects the principle of free, prior and informed consent, consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the obligations set out in the Act and common law.

I respect the right of all First Nations to self determination, to carry out activities in accordance with their Indigenous practices, laws, and preferences and to participate in processes that have the potential to impact their rights under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The potentially affected First Nations who engaged in the environmental assessment participated in a variety of ways. I recognize the substantial capacity that First Nations put into participating in this environmental assessment; their efforts have contributed to a more robust assessment that considers their knowledge and perspectives.

I recognize that development of major mines in northwestern B.C. has affected First Nation communities and ways of life, and that, by virtue of extending the Red Chris mine life, the Block Cave Project will have continued impacts on communities and ecosystems and in the region. While the scope of my decision relates to the potential effects of the Block Cave Project activities and the conditions proposed to mitigate those effects, I recognize that existing major projects and other industrial development in the area have been considered in the EAO's assessment of how impacts of the Block Cave Project would contribute to cumulative effects. I note that the EAO has also proposed a condition to require NRCML to participate in relevant regional cumulative effects initiatives.

Declaration Act Agreement with Tahltan Central Government

I recognize the significant collaboration of the EAO and TCG in implementing the second consent-based decision-making agreement under the *Declaration Act*. Under the Declaration Act Agreement, TCG undertook its own assessment of effects to Tahltan and their rights and interests in the Tahltan Risk Assessment. It is apparent to me from the referral package that the EAO and TCG demonstrated a strong partnership in coordinating their assessments to ensure each party's decision-making requirements were met.

I considered the conclusions of the Tahltan Risk Assessment and the process undertaken by the EAO and TCG under the Declaration Act Agreement. I met with TCG Leadership on June 1, 2026, as an opportunity to hear directly from them regarding their decision and their priorities for a continued partnership with the Province related to mining in Tahltan territory. I am satisfied that the obligations under the Declaration Act Agreement have been met. I acknowledge the EAO and TCG worked together to draft Amendment Certificate conditions that set out a clear process for TCG's involvement in the EAO's ongoing oversight of NRCML's compliance with the Amendment Certificate, including significant requirements for collaboration with TCG. I respect that the Tahltan Risk Assessment concluded that, while there are effects to Tahltan Nation not fully mitigated by the EAO, these effects are better addressed outside the environmental assessment process. I am satisfied that other provincial ministries are engaging with TCG to support advancement of these broader commitments and discussions. This includes a commitment to exploring updates to the Tahltan – Province Government-to-Government Red Cross Management Agreement, initially signed in 2017, and to ensure the agreement reflects the continued evolution of our government-to-government relationship. The Block Cave Project decisions under the Declaration Act Agreement represent a significant achievement in the Province's efforts to support First Nation decision making and reconciliation, and I look forward to continuing to the continued partnership between the province and TCG.

Consultation with Nisga'a Lisims Government and Indigenous Nations

I acknowledge that the assessment of effects to Nisga'a Lisims Government was undertaken in accordance with Chapter 10 of the Nisga'a Final Agreement and fulfills the Crown's obligations to assess these effects according to paragraphs 8(e) and 8(f) of Chapter 10. I recognize that the EAO and Nisga'a Lisims Government reached consensus on key issues and materials throughout the assessment.

As the concentrate transportation route passes partly through the asserted Gitanyow Nation territory, the EAO notified Gitanyow Nation of key milestones during the Amendment Assessment. I understand that NRCML has engaged with Gitanyow Nation on the Wilp Sustainability Assessment Process (WSAP) and that Gitanyow Nation has not yet issued a Project Decision Statement pursuant to their WSAP. I note that the EAO has communicated its acknowledgment and respect for the WSAP throughout the environmental assessment. I am of the view that the consultation process that the EAO followed was adequate and that the potential adverse effects on Gitanyow Nation's Section 35 rights have been appropriately avoided, minimized or otherwise accommodated, and that the EAO fulfilled the Provincial Crown's duty to consult.

As the concentrate transportation route passes partly through the asserted territory of Tsetsaut Skii Km Lax Ha, the EAO notified Tsetsaut Skii Km Lax Ha of key milestones during the Amendment Assessment. I understand that the EAO has also provided opportunities for government-to-government meetings to discuss the Block Cave Project's effects and proposed mitigations, and drafted the assessment of effects to Tsetsaut Skii km Lax Ha with opportunities for review and input. I reviewed the EAO's assessment of potential effects to Tsetsaut Skii km Lax Ha and agree with the EAO that those potential effects have been adequately avoided, minimized or otherwise accommodated, and that the EAO fulfilled the Provincial Crown's duty to consult.

Additional Considerations

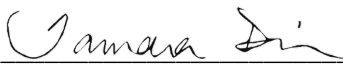
I considered that, as an amendment to an existing operational mine that would support its continued operation, the Block Cave Project would provide benefits to local communities, First Nations, and other British Columbians through continued regional employment and economic investment. I am also aware of the potential positive effects of the Block Cave Project on Indigenous economies, contracting opportunities and jobs. I acknowledge the information from TCG regarding the updated Impact Benefit Agreement with NRCML, and that the execution of that agreement is one of the conditions of TCG's decision to consent to the Block Cave Project. As earlier noted, I have also been made aware of broader provincial discussions and commitments with TCG, separate from the environmental assessment, regarding additional measures in relation to the Block Cave Project.

CONCLUSIONS

Having considered all materials provided by the CEAO and the Notice of Decision issued by the TCG Board of Directors, I have decided to issue the Amendment to Certificate #M05-02 for the Block Cave Project.

The Certified Project Description, which forms part of the Amendment Certificate, limits what the Holder is authorized to do with respect to the Project. The Amendment Certificate also includes conditions that the Holder must abide by, in addition to the existing conditions from the existing Environmental Assessment Certificate and previous amendments. These aspects of the Amendment Certificate provide me the confidence to conclude that the Block Cave Project will be carried out such that no significant adverse effects are likely to occur.

I express my gratitude to everyone who participated in the environmental assessment for their contribution and engagement in the process, including the public, technical advisors and First Nations leadership and staff. I would like to thank the EAO for all their work throughout the assessment. I recognize the significance of the collaboration you carried out in the assessment. And finally, I wish to recognize the significant work done by TCG staff and leadership in partnering with B.C. to successfully complete the environmental assessment.



Honourable Tamara Davidson
Minister of Environment and Parks

Signed this 18th day of June 2026