
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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April 15, 2021

Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

Dease Lake Airport upgrades benefit community

DEASE LAKE – People who rely on the Dease Lake Airport for access to health care, emergency services, and those who rely on transportation for work, including the mining sector, will benefit from \$9 million in StrongerBC economic recovery funding for airport upgrades.

“This funding will significantly improve air access to Dease Lake and the surrounding communities,” said Bruce Ralston, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation. “The upgrades will enhance emergency services for people in this part of our province. The provincial investment will also lead to better access for mineral exploration and the mining sector, creating good-paying, long-term jobs in the region.”

The StrongerBC funding will support improvements, such as safety upgrades to enable medevac services, runway repaving and lighting improvements and is the result of the work of the Stikine Airport Society (SAS) co-ordinating engagements across government and multiple industry stakeholders. The upgrades will expand commercial and mining activity in the Northwest by ensuring the airport meets standards for Transport Canada Civil Aviation certification.

“The Dease Lake Airport upgrades fit with our plan to build an inclusive, sustainable economic recovery that works for everyone,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation. “Our goal is to provide communities with the supports needed to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic safer and stronger than before.”

Additional funding to cover the full project cost of \$11 million is being provided by the regional district of Kitimat-Stikine and several companies operating in Tahltan Territory, including Red Chris joint venture (JV) operator Newcrest Mining Limited, Newmont/Teck Resources, Seabridge, Skeena Resources Limited and Pretivm Resources Inc.

“The Stikine Airport Society is proud to receive this funding to improve the infrastructure at the Dease Lake Airport, located on the territory of the Tahltan Nation,” said Brian Young, treasurer, Stikine Airport Society. “I have been on the board for the past decade and I have witnessed the many challenges inherent with ensuring safe and reliable air service to the B.C. Northwest. In collaboration with Tahltan Nation Development Corporation, and with support from the community and other local investors, notably Newcrest Mining, we have helped to secure a future for economic recovery in the area, through these critical infrastructure improvements.”

The town of Dease Lake is the largest community in the northwest of the province. It is home to approximately 475 people. Another 3,500 to 4,000 people from surrounding communities rely on the town as a central service hub.

“The safety of our members is always our priority and that is why I am grateful for the upgrades

at the Dease Lake Airport,” said Chief Carmen McPhee, Tahltan Band Council. “Indeed, improved air access will provide Tahltans with more timely medevac service that will save lives.”

The region is often referred to as the Golden Triangle for its abundance of mineral deposits. More than half of B.C.’s mineral exploration spending takes place in the region, which is home to the Red Chris and Brucejack mines.

“Access to timely medical transportation has been a serious and long-standing issue for our remote Tahltan communities, something Tahltan Leadership has been working hard to change,” said Chief Marie Quock, Iskut Band Council. “I am so happy that upgrades will now allow for 24-hour landing and take-offs, thereby providing Tahltans with medevac services that the rest of B.C. enjoys.”

The Province and Tahltan Central Government have been working together to advance a shared interest in building an enduring, resilient government-to-government relationship in respect of land and resource use, and community, social and economic development within the Tahltan Territory. While more work remains to be done, making improvements to the Dease Lake Airport is an important step forward.

Quotes:

Nathan Cullen, MLA for Stikine –

“The Dease Lake Airport is integral to Dease Lake and the surrounding community. These upgrades will vastly improve a lifeline for health and wildfire readiness that also supports economic growth in the region and the vast area it serves. Having a safe, reliable connection to the rest of the province through air transport is an economic and health-care necessity. Thank you to the local leadership for your advocacy.”

Mark Adams, general manager, Newcrest Red Chris Mine JV –

“The Dease Lake Airport is an important central hub for many of the mining operations in the territory, and an integral piece to the long-term success of those operations, including our Red Chris mine. We are delighted to be able to provide support for a project that not only assists in the efficient operations of the mine, but that also contributes to the health and safety and well-being of Tahltan communities.”

Jamie Gleason, interim CEO, Tahltan Nation Development Corporation (TNDC) –

“This funding is welcome news, which will improve flight service and safety for the region and benefit the Nation’s aviation businesses. TNDC’s goal is to expand Dease Lake airport services for commercial flights to serve both industry and the Tahltan community. We are grateful to the Government of B.C. and Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine for sharing in this vision through their financial contributions and to the Stikine Airport Society and Newcrest Mining Limited for their support of TNDC as the contract airport operator.”

A backgrounder follows.

Contact:

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BACKGROUND

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Dease Lake Airport partners' biographies

About the Stikine Airport Society:

The Stikine Airport Society is headed by a volunteer board of directors, the membership of which is drawn from the local community and aviation-related businesses operating provincially and regionally in the Dease Lake area. This non-profit organization was formed in 2010 (replacing the former Dease Lake Airport Society) and continues to maintain and operate the Dease Lake Airport. Part of the society's constitution is to develop the airport as required, meeting the changing needs of the Town of Dease Lake and surrounding area.

About the Tahltan Nation:

The Tahltan Central Government (TCG) is the administrative governing body of the Tahltan Nation. The Iskut Band and the Tahltan Band continue to govern Tahltan interests with respect to the Indian Act in the communities of Iskut, Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek. The TCG is the representative government of the Tahltan Nation with respect to the inherent and collective Aboriginal title and rights shared by all Tahltan people.

The Tahltan Nation's Territory spans 95,933 square kilometres of northwestern British Columbia, the equivalent of 11% of the province. Tahltan Territory includes 70% of B.C.'s Golden Triangle – a world-class mining jurisdiction with a thriving mineral exploration sector. To learn more, visit: www.tahltan.org

About the Tahltan Nation Development Corporation (TNDC):

Tahltan Nation Development Corporation is the business arm of the Tahltan Nation. TNDC pursues sustainable and responsible business and economic development opportunities in the region that lead to employment, training and business opportunities for Tahltan members. TNDC provides heavy construction, earthworks, camp services, air support, aviation, energy, forestry, transportation and fibre-optic communications services. TNDC serves the resource exploration, mine development and mining, building construction, forestry, hydroelectric power, civil, infrastructure and public works sectors. TNDC has been offering airport services at the Dease Lake Airport since 2020 and in February 2021 signed a contract with the Stikine Airport Society to become the contract airport operator through 2024.

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