



Blockade could shut mine: Imperial Metals

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Red Chris blockade. (SUBMITTED)

Imperial Metals is applying in court to have Mounties come and remove First Nations blockaders who have closed off access roads to its Red Chris gold and copper project in northwest B.C.

In an Oct. 3 filing, Imperial subsidiary Red Chris Development Company Ltd. said the blockaders — from the Klabona Keepers and the Secwepemc — “will not allow anyone or any supplies through” to reach the project site.

“An enforcement order is required as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have taken the position that they will not enforce a court order for an injunction without an enforcement order,” Imperial said.

Currently, according to the application, blockaders are letting people leave the site as long as supplies aren’t being flown to it instead.

Imperial said it has been using air transportation to “bring in essential materials” — food and fuel had relied on ground transportation previously.

“They advised that if helicopters were used to support the project by bringing personnel or supplies to the project site, then no one would be allowed to leave,” the company said in its court document.

Imperial, meanwhile, has also filed legal action for damages.

“Red Chris has been forced to severely limit its construction activities at the project site, and if the blockade continues, will be forced to halt them altogether,” Imperial said in court documents.

“This may cause Red Chris to delay operations, lay off employees and cancel or limit the contracts it enters.”

According to the claim, blockades have been set up since days after Imperial’s Mount Polley tailings dam was breached — releasing contaminated water into the Quesnel river system.

In a statement late last month, the Klabona Keepers — an organization of Tahltan elders — said Imperial’s Red Chris tailing facility is “much larger” than the Mount Polley facility, but uses the same structure and technology.

“So it’s not a question of if, but when the storage facility would breach and destroy yet another integral salmon-bearing watershed,” it said.

The Klabona Keepers, who alerted 24 hours to the injunction filing, was not available for comment by press time.

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