



BRITISH COLUMBIA

VIA EMAIL

Ref. 622518

August 25, 2021

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British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
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c/o Email: morris@ubcic.bc.ca

Dear First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC):

Thank you for your letter of August 6, 2021, concerning the recommendations made in *Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia* and the ongoing response to wildfires in the interior region.

The Chapman/Abbott Report and other substantive reports you noted have provided valuable guidance as the Province continues to work toward improvements to enhance emergency management practices with Indigenous communities, particularly for flood and wildfire events. Of the 108 recommendations, 60 are complete, 23 have seen substantial improvement, and 16 are underway (99 in total). However, many of the fundamental issues highlighted by Chief Chapman and George Abbott remain relevant today, and we acknowledge that there is still much to do.

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The need for substantial progress on reconciliation is a priority in emergency management. Similarly, we need to continue to enhance cultural safety in training, operations, and planning — including in Emergency Support Services. While we have started training to base evacuee care supports on Indigenous wise practices from previous fire seasons, we are still early in that learning journey and look forward to collaborating with Indigenous communities and support organizations, like the First Nations Emergency Services Society, to continue that critical work.

I would also like to share that provincial government staff recently initiated a meeting with Chief Chapman to review the progress on the recommendations. On the “All Chiefs Town Hall” meeting on August 13, Emergency Management BC (EMBC) also committed to reviewing the recommendations in partnership with Chief Chapman, the First Nations Leadership Council, and other partners. EMBC and the BC Wildfire Service look forward to learning how we can build upon these recommendations this fall after the current wildfire season is behind us and the immediate threat to communities has subsided.

The Lytton fire that you have noted was sudden and spread rapidly causing devastating impacts to Lytton First Nations, the Village of Lytton and surrounding communities, quickly displacing and scattering people from their homes. The province has been providing support to communities since the onset, and the Interim Provincial Disaster Recovery Framework structure has been activated, coordinating across government to support community-led recovery planning and operations. In addition, the Nlaka’pamux Nation Tribal Council (NNTC)-BC-Canada Coordination Task Force on Wildfire Recovery has also been initiated as part of BC’s and Canada’s commitment to working with NNTC in a government-to-government relationship and premised on the recognition and implementation of Nlaka’pamux Nation title, rights, laws, and jurisdiction.

Specific to your request for a meeting to discuss First Nations inclusion in a tripartite emergency services agreement, we look forward to this conversation with you and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to collectively advance First Nations capacity and emergency management. We request that you reach out directly to ISC to arrange this meeting.

I appreciate being made aware of your concerns.

Sincerely,



Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety
and Solicitor General

pc: The Honourable John Horgan
The Honourable Marc Miller, PC, MP
The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, PC, MP
The Honourable Bill Blair, PC, COM, MP
The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, PC, MP
The Honourable Murray Rankin, QC
The Honourable Katrine Conroy