

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

August 06, 2021



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Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Via Email only: PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Honourable Katrine Conroy
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural
Development
Via Email only: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Ministers,

RE: Implementation of the recommendations made in “Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia” and other reports

We write to remind you of the Province’s commitment to the implementation of the recommendations made in *Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia*, also known as the Chapman/Abbott Report.

This, and other substantive reports by First Nations, including: “[Trial by Fire: Nadleh Whut’en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report](#)” and the Tšilhqot’in report “[The Fires Awakened Us \(Nagwedižk’an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidžed Ganexwilagh\)](#)”, emphasize the need for inclusion and partnership with First Nations in all aspects of emergency management decision-making and implementation, consistent with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act*.

At this early stage of the fire season, First Nations have informed us that thus far, the Province’s response has been severely inadequate and continues to replicate the harms experienced in the 2017 wildfire season. The response to the Lytton wildfire is a striking example of the Province’s failure to manage emergencies through government-to-government relationships which honour First Nations’ jurisdiction. EMBC and BCWS failed to coordinate and communicate with the Nlaka’pamux Nation Tribal Council and Lytton First Nation in an effective and timely manner, leaving First Nations unnecessarily and unacceptably vulnerable to the wildfire.

UBCIC received numerous reports of ESS staff being insensitive to the trauma of Indigenous evacuees and treating them without basic decency. Incidents during the Lytton wildfire evacuation are part of a pattern of systemic racism known and documented in the context of emergency

management of British Columbia. We remind you of recommendation 9 of the Chapman/Abbott Report, which calls on governments to “build cultural sensitivity training and awareness of racism and discrimination into emergency management plans.” The report clearly states that “Bias has no place in any situation, especially emergencies when communities and lives may be at risk.”

Correcting the Province’s pattern of emergency mismanagement requires fundamental recognition of First Nations’ jurisdiction over emergency management and the protection of their peoples and territories. Long-term funding that provides for meaningful investment in planning and infrastructure is essential for First Nations to fully exercise their jurisdiction. As well, emergency management funding to First Nations communities must be increased substantially and all levels of government must be prepared to work in full collaboration, cooperation, and cultural safety with First Nations. These are increasingly urgent priorities in the context of our changing climate.

For too long, various levels of government have acted in paternalistic ways that have undermined First Nations’ authority. That must end. Concrete steps to that end include the implementation of the Chapman/Abbott report, reports by First Nations (“[Trial by Fire: Nadleh Whut’ en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report](#)” and the T̓silhqot’in report “[The Fires Awakened Us \(Nagwedižk’an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidžed Ganexwilagh\)](#)”), and expanded support for the Tripartite Emergency Management Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2019 between the FNLC, Canada, and the province of BC. Beyond the implementation of already existing recommendations, we must turn our attention to First Nations’ inclusion in a tripartite emergency services agreement. We request a political meeting as set out in the MOU to discuss these matters no later than August of 2021.

Finally, we note that the last update on the implementation of the Chapman/Abbott report was in 2019 and was not done independently, but was the Province doing a review of its own progress. In our view the status report from 2019 was overly optimistic regarding implementation at that time. The authors of the report have recently urged the Province to take their report off the shelf, as they do not feel it is being implemented. We request that the Province engage Chief Maureen Chapman and George Abbott to do an independent review of the report and provide an itemized update on this critical work to First Nations in BC.

Sincerely,

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT



Cheryl Casimer



Robert Phillips



Lydia Hwitsum

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip



Chief Don Tom



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson

On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:



Regional Chief Terry Teegee

cc: Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services
Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Honourable Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia