

British Columbia News

Province boosts support for emergency preparedness, wildfire risk reduction

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/19837>

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Kelowna - To support community resiliency in the face of wildfires, floods and other emergencies, the Province is giving a \$31 million boost to the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) for local governments and First Nations.

This brings the total program funding to \$69.5 million.

“In the wake of consecutive record-breaking wildfire and flood seasons, the Province is providing more resources to help prepare communities and keep people safe in a disaster,” said Premier John Horgan. “With these investments, we are supporting communities and emergency responders to reduce wildfire risk and better mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies.”

The Province is also investing an additional \$19 million for 40 wildfire risk reduction projects in B.C. communities, delivered through the Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. Thirty-six of the 40 approved projects are for fuel management projects that will directly reduce wildfire risk within two kilometres of a community.

“Wildfire risk mitigation work is critical to the health and well-being of our forests, our wildlife and our communities,” said Wayne Clogg, Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. board chair. “These 40 new projects throughout the province will now have the funding they need to start wildfire risk mitigation work. In many cases, this funding is the catalyst to develop wildfire risk mitigation strategies and conduct treatments on the ground to protect and safeguard their communities.”

The CEPF funding includes \$30 million to help eligible applicants in local government and First Nations communities build resiliency through structural flood mitigation projects, flood risk assessments, mapping and mitigation planning. In addition to flood-specific funding, there is also support for resiliency in the face of all emergencies, including funds for evacuation route planning, emergency operations centre and emergency support services training and equipment.

“The Community Emergency Preparedness Fund investment is part of collaborative work underway to improve emergency management around B.C.,” said Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General. “The Province will continue to work in partnership with local governments and First Nations to respond to major emergencies and make sure they have the resources they need to respond to the unique challenges their communities face.”

The new CEPF funding also provides \$1 million for Indigenous Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility Training, which will support eligible applicants to provide emergency management personnel with training to more effectively partner with and assist Indigenous communities during times of emergency.

“One of the findings of the Abbott-Chapman review was that governments in the past did not do enough to clean up areas around communities, and that increased the risk of catastrophic wildfires,” said Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “With this funding, our government is providing B.C. communities with the tools they need to keep people safe.”

The Province funds wildfire risk reduction activities through the \$60-million Community Resiliency Investment Program and through the Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. Wildfire risk reduction activities include fuel management treatments to reduce fine fuels in forests and FireSmart activities that communities and landowners can undertake.

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Quick Facts:

- Last year, for the second year in a row, B.C. experienced record-breaking flood and fire seasons, damaging homes, challenging communities and displacing British Columbians.
- Since the spring of 2017, the Province has invested \$1.64 billion on flood and wildfire response and recovery through the Emergency Program Act (EPA) and BC Wildfire Service operational costs (\$382 million EPA, plus \$1.26 billion wildfire).
- The new \$31-million CEPF funding is part of an additional \$36-million investment in the CEPF and expanded eligibility to include First Nations communities. On May 10, 2019, the Province announced \$5 million for a new stream of CEPF to support volunteer and composite fire departments.
- Funding for the CEPF is provided by the B.C. government and administered through the Union of BC Municipalities.

Learn More:

Community Emergency Preparedness Fund: <https://www.ubcm.ca/EN/main/funding/lgps/community-emergency-preparedness-fund.html>

Forest Enhancement Society of B.C.: <http://www.fesbc.ca>

FireSmart: <http://www.firesmartbc.ca>

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