



Disaster Response and Recovery

WHITEHORSE, July 22, 2016 - Today, Premiers discussed the significant impact of natural disasters on Canadians and their communities, disaster response and the subsequent recovery process.

Recent events across Canada have underscored the need for strong and coordinated systems for disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Premiers discussed the need for the federal government to recommit to its critical and stabilizing role in these areas. Disaster events do not necessarily occur in equal frequency or severity in each province or territory, and clustered events have the potential to put immense strain on an individual jurisdiction's fiscal capacity.

Premiers agreed that the federal government's current approach to disaster response and recovery does not stabilize impacted jurisdictions or address the increasing frequency of extreme weather events related to climate change such as wildland fires and floods. Premiers directed their Ministers responsible for emergency management to collaborate to develop a new model for disaster response and recovery and to work with the federal government to create a modernized Emergency Management Framework for Canada.

In 2015, the previous federal government made changes to their Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements which substantially reduced the federal government's share of disaster-related costs, offloading these onto individuals, provinces and territories. Premiers urged the federal government to:

- reinstate funding thresholds back to the levels that existed before 2015;
- quickly reimburse the upfront disaster costs that provinces and territories pay for at the time of the event
- expand the program coverage of catastrophic events;
- work with the insurance industry to expand the availability of and access to insurance products related to disasters; and
- improve federal disaster assistance for replacement infrastructure built to a more resilient standard.

Premiers also discussed the National Disaster Mitigation Program and the importance of prevention in avoiding substantive disaster recovery costs down the road. They urged the federal government to increase its financial commitment to preventing disasters, noting that that \$40 million a year for five years for the whole country is not adequate to meet major high-priority flood protection needs across Canada. They stressed the need to increase the funding for the program and expand the scope to cover other catastrophic events such as wildland fires, ice storms and landslides.

Premiers also noted that the Council of Forest Ministers recently reaffirmed its commitment to a vision of wildland fire management in Canada that focuses on fostering resilient communities. Premiers support this vision but noted that real progress toward the vision will require enhanced and expanded collaboration and a commitment of resources from all governments. Premiers called on the federal government to bolster its existing disaster mitigation efforts by contributing significant new funding for the implementation of the Canadian Wildland Fire Strategy. This funding could be further leveraged through investments in mitigation measures such as firefighting infrastructure upgrades and enhanced capacity for Indigenous communities and reserves.

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