



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Honourable John Horgan, MLA
Premier of British Columbia
West Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4

August 20, 2021

Dear Premier Horgan,

While you were away, thousands of British Columbians have experienced evacuation orders and alerts while countless others faced the smoke and flames from wildfires raging in much of our province.

As you return to British Columbia, our communities are looking for greater certainty, better communication, and financial supports to assist with the loss of homes, and other impacts to property and livelihoods. We, therefore urge your government to take the following initial actions immediately:

1. Expedite implementation of the Alert Ready System (ARS) in British Columbia and improve the stability and currency of communication of critical information. It's vital that people receive notification of wildfire-related dangers as quickly as possible. With DriveBC going down earlier this week, families lacking detailed information about the movement of residents from healthcare centres including long term care residences, and no progress on your government's promise to utilize the Alert Ready System (ARS) to notify British Columbians of evacuation alerts and orders, it is clear that much more must be done to ensure that people are prepared and aware of the situation on the ground.
2. Establish a cross-ministry cabinet wildfire working group. On behalf of the Official Opposition, and British Columbians in every corner of our province, I am requesting that this be implemented immediately to ensure that every possible resource is made available and all supports requiring multiple ministries can be streamlined and delivered to people throughout our province in an efficient and timely manner.

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3. I am also requesting that you advise us on the progress of recovery planning for communities devastated by fires, such as Lytton and Monte Lake, and that you immediately engage the federal government to secure Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) to help replace or repair the basic and essential personal property of individual British Columbians, including for those who lost their homes to wildfires and did not have insurance on their homes. It is imperative that these British Columbians hear a clear and unequivocal statement from you that you have their backs and will ensure they get the financial support needed to rebuild their homes and their lives as quickly as possible.

Official Opposition MLAs have heard from people on the ground throughout this wildfire season and it will be important that there be a mechanism for us to report, through official channels, on the gaps and shortcomings that have occurred during the 2021 wildfire season. We must ensure that lessons are learned, changes are made and that we are better prepared for future wildfire events. We hope that the feedback from British Columbians who faced difficult and often heartbreaking circumstances will help inform future government responses so that our province is not forced to experience the devastating impacts that far too many have faced in our province this summer.

During these incredibly difficult times, people in harm's way deserve nothing less than the full attention and support of this government. This is a crisis, and people are counting on you.

I, and the many British Columbians impacted by the 2021 wildfires, look forward to your expeditious response.

Sincerely,

Shirley Bond
Interim Leader of the Official Opposition
MLA, Prince George-Valemount