

FOR RELEASE
May 5, 2016

Western premiers support joint action on wildland fires, floods and drought

Joint news release

VANCOUVER—Western premiers acknowledged progress, as directed by Canada's premiers last year, on creating a national inventory of firefighting resources and ensuring that training is provided to Canadian Forces personnel in wildfire firefighting techniques. Western premiers appreciate the effort of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre in pursuing these initiatives.

Western premiers agreed that the federal government must work collaboratively with provinces and territories to better predict, prepare for, and respond to weather-related emergencies and natural disasters. They reiterated their call for the federal government to reverse changes to the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements which offload additional emergency support and recovery costs onto individuals, provinces and territories. They also expressed concern about long delays in disbursement of funds under these arrangements.

Western premiers also discussed the importance of investing in disaster mitigation infrastructure in order to reduce the scale and cost of natural disasters. They agreed that the \$200 million over five years available for priority projects across the country through the National Disaster Mitigation Program is insufficient, and reasserted their call for the federal government to significantly increase dedicated disaster mitigation infrastructure funding. They also agreed that an enhanced National Disaster Mitigation Program should include wildland fires among the natural hazards identified in its national risk profile.

Western premiers called on the federal government to provide funding support for a national program to increase support for public education and mitigation activities related to wildland fires (including the Firesmart program) and for wildland fire research. They also called on the federal government to increase emergency management capacity. This includes measures to improve fire preparedness and suppression capacity, such as improvements to aging infrastructure, providing equipment, and enhancing Aboriginal firefighting capacity and increasing protection of Aboriginal and other rural communities from wildland fires.

Western premiers also discussed the importance of provinces and territories working cooperatively on watershed management, particularly as more extreme cycles of drought and flooding are expected. Premiers committed to further collaboration on issues related to drainage, drought, flooding and water quality in shared watersheds.

- 30 -

Contact:

Stephen Smart
Press Secretary
Office of the Premier
Province of British Columbia
250-952-7252

News Release #16-176



Stay up to date with the latest Yukon government news by subscribing to our RSS feed here:
<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/rss.html>. Or follow us on Twitter @yukongov.