



Cariboo Regional District
File No. 400.20

Reference: 238748

AUG 13 2018

August 9, 2018

Referred To CAO/Chair

Chair Margo Wagner
Cariboo Regional District
Suite D - 180 N 3rd Avenue
Williams Lake, British Columbia
V2G 2A4

Dear Chair Wagner:

Thank you for your letter of April 12, 2018, regarding a UBCM resolution and the provincial response. I have been asked to respond and apologize for the delay.

Given the 2017 wildfire season, and our past experience, it is clear that evolving risks posed by wildfires means that the province must adapt and explore new possibilities of risk reduction and wildfire preparation initiatives. I appreciate that the resolution put forward by the Cariboo Regional District, and endorsed by UBCM, called for the development of a Fire Mitigation Strategy in the management of our provincial forests.

The province is working with the federal government and other provinces and territories to develop actions to support the implementation of the 2016 Canadian Wildland Fire Strategy. This strategy provides a comprehensive foundation for a substantive, collective shift away from a purely reactive approach to one of integrated prevention and mitigation.

As noted in the response to your resolution, wildfire risks from industrial activities are currently mitigated through prescribed shutdown formulas that are based on weather and fire danger levels and local area restrictions in accordance with the *Wildfire Act* and the *Wildfire Regulation*. This proactive approach is done to protect the public as a first priority.

The BC Wildfire Service regularly reviews policies and procedures, and is currently reviewing the recommendations of the 2017 BC Flood and Fire review report, *Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia*. The goal of this independent review was to learn from the 2017 experience by determining what worked well and identifying recommendations for improvement, including communication and ways to enhance cooperation between agencies. An important part of the review process involved reaching out to communities affected by the 2017 wildfire season and listening to their thoughts and concerns. Government will be providing a response to the recommendations in October 2018.

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Chair Margo Wagner

In addition, coordinated work is underway to mitigate wildfires across the province. Since 2004, more than \$81 million has been made available through Strategic Wildfire Protection Initiative (SWPI) to help local governments and First Nations significantly reduce wildfire risks around their communities, through community wildfire planning, fuel reduction treatments, and FireSmart activities. As of June 27, 2018, 337 Community Wildfire Protection Plans had been completed by local governments and First Nations. These plans identify areas at risk, and prescribe fuel-management projects to address those risks.

Furthermore, fuel reduction treatments and funding opportunities to advance community wildfire protection are already underway through the Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia (FESBC). The province has made \$235 million available through FESBC to enhance forest health, including wildfire prevention.

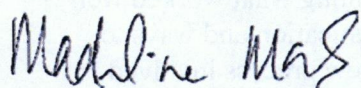
The province also recognized that more must be done to help protect our citizens, assets and livelihoods. The new Community Resiliency Investment Program will build on the lessons learned and successes of SWIPI, with \$50 million allocated over three years in provincial Budget 2018 to help communities reduce wildfire risks. This program supports two main categories of work: Landscape Level Priorities to fund fuel treatments on Crown land aimed at protecting high-value assets; and Community Funding and Supports to help communities undertake fire prevention activities on private and public land.

Further, as part of Budget 2018, the provincial government is providing \$50 million over three years to help communities become better prepared for wildfires, through investments in wildfire risk-reduction projects.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development supports forest management initiatives including harvesting and reforestation of the affected areas when conditions allow for safe execution. The strategies for doing so are continuously reviewed to ensure success.

Thank you for taking the time to follow up on the resolution and provincial response. The unprecedented wildfire season last year demonstrated the importance for all levels of government, the public, and stakeholders to work together to identify and address wildfire threats. Communities are embracing this shared responsibility, and local government support will be key in developing effective solutions to reduce wildfire risk and protect communities into the future.

Sincerely,



Madeline L. Maley, RPF
Executive Director
BC Wildfire Service

pc: Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource
Operations and Rural Development

File: 400-20

April 12, 2018

The Honourable Doug Donaldson
Minister Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations
& Rural Development
PO Box 9049, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Donaldson:

Re: UBCM Resolution and Provincial Response

In 2017 the Cariboo Regional District proposed, and the membership of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) endorsed, the following resolution:

"Whereas wildfires have plagued much of British Columbia's Interior this summer, and will continue to threaten communities, particularly with predicted climate change;

And whereas forest restrictions continue to hamper fire mitigation efforts, and public safety should be the number one priority:

Therefore be it resolved that, under the Forest & Range Practices Act, the Government Actions Regulation (GAR) include regulations that initiate a Fire Mitigation Strategy that prioritizes public safety over other forest management initiatives including harvesting and reforestation of the affected areas."

Recently the Board of Directors received the Provincial Response, as communicated to the UBCM. It was as follows:

"During the fire season, the safety of the public and firefighters is always our top priority.

Depending on the prevailing weather conditions and fire danger ratings, forest industry personnel may be required to cease operations in a particular region to reduce wildfire risks.

Industry personnel are required to adhere to prescribed shutdown formulas in accordance with the Wildfire Act and the Wildfire Regulation."

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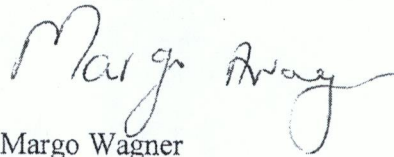
building communities together

The Provincial Response, in the Board's view does not deal with issues proposed in our resolution. Our resolution calls for the primacy of public safety and the development of a Fire Mitigation Strategy in the management of our provincial forests. We are proposing a broader mandate that will also consider fuel mitigation in traditionally untouchable areas such as old growth management areas and mule deer winter ranges.

We would ask that your Ministry reconsider its response in light of this clarification.

If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margo Wagner". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Margo Wagner
Chair

c: Donna Barnett, MLA, Cariboo-Chilcotin
Coralee Oakes, MLA, Cariboo-North