



December 9, 2020

Reference # 200212

Honourable Mike Farnworth

Minister Public Safety and Solicitor General

VIA Email Only: [PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:PSSG.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Dear: Minister Farnworth

**Re: Highway 26 Corridor**

I have received numerous phone calls and letters from constituents that are concerned with their safety along the Highway 26 corridor. With water levels in our streams, rivers, lakes, swamps, and highway crossings that are close to, or at similar levels to the spring of 2020. With pooling water at numerous areas along Highway 26. As it is not draining due to high water levels, plugged or collapsed culverts, these areas have the possibility of tragic results should a vehicle leave the road due to poor conditions.

Highway 26 goes through the communities of Barlow Creek, Cottonwood, Wells, Barkerville Historic Town and connects to the Bowron Lake area and to Likely, Big Lake, Horsefly to Williams Lake via the Barkerville/Williams Lake Circle Route.

Highway 26 is a very busy corridor with logging, mining, contractors, historic town workers, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, visitors, and residents that travel it daily. We are entering into winter here in Cariboo North and already we have concerns with water levels, the impact of future snowpack, dead trees, power outages, lack of communication with no cell phone coverage and telephone lines that are constantly out in this area. All these concerns are for the safety of the residents, travelers and industry.

There have been numerous power outages that have been vehicle, animal, ground instability, and weather related, causing trees, both dead and green to knock down power lines including telecommunications.

Without power there is no satellite internet, without telephone lines, there is no access to 911. There is no way of communicating with anyone. The lack of cell phone coverage due to the remote highway puts not only drivers at risk but first responders as well.

One example is the Wells Volunteer Fire Brigade they connect to dispatch through the telephone lines and they are unable to call out for emergency support if the lines are down. This is very concerning. As temperatures drop with the onset of winter, power outages put homes, critical infrastructure, and people at risk.

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I wanted to bring this to your attention, and ask if your ministry will work with the communities along the Highway 26 corridor to identify gaps in emergency response procedures and what resources are needed for these communities?

I look forward to your response so we can keep our communities safe.

Best regards,

Coralee Oakes,  
MLA Cariboo North

CC:

Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Rob Fleming  
District of Wells Mayor and Council  
Cariboo Regional District Director John Massier  
Barkerville Historic Town  
Carrie Chard Fire Chief District of Wells