

The Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia
PO Box 9041 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1



October 5, 2023

Dear Premier,

RE: 2023 Wildfire Response – Announcement of Task Force

On August 28th, I wrote a letter to your office on behalf of our Council and its community requesting a 3rd party review of the 2023 wildfire response. As you are aware, this request has been echoed by the majority of British Columbians and their respective elected representatives. The importance of this request was reiterated and communicated by those in attendance at this year's UBCM Convention.

Therefore, it came as quite a disappointment to hear the announcement that while there will indeed be a special task force assigned, it will not include any elected officials or those with direct ties to the forest and agricultural industries. While the task force establishment is a step in the right direction, its effectiveness will ultimately be limited when no elected officials, licensee representatives, MLAs or those from the opposition are also provided a seat at the table.

While I am pleased to hear of the appointment of the Thompson Nicola Regional District's CAO, Scott Hildabrand and the representation of area First Nations, the exclusion of those who are elected by the public as well as those who have valuable wildfire suppression knowledge and experience, is counter-productive and limits the effectiveness of the task force.

With the unprecedented wildfires that raged throughout our Province in 2023 which destroyed more land, homes, and infrastructure than ever before, and which resulted in an increase in public outcry regarding some aspects of BC Wildfire's tactical response, the Province has a responsibility to do what it can to restore public trust. When the people that the public have elected to represent them are refused the opportunity to be a part of the solution and those who have first-hand expertise feel shut out, public trust can be jeopardized. This ultimately puts British Columbians at risk. Those that have been appointed to the task force are certainly qualified and will provide excellent input into the process. However, on behalf of our Council and the many in our Province who share these same sentiments, I respectfully request that elected officials, forest industry contractors and representatives from the opposition be invited to participate in this important task force. In addition, we also will welcome the option for Minister Rolston to conduct an independent 3rd party review of the 2023 wildfire response as he has recently suggested at UBCM.

Respectfully,

Mayor Ward Stamer
District of Barriere
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Cc: Ministry of Forests
Chief George Lampreau, Simpcw First Nation
BC Regional Districts