

President of the King's Privy Council for Canada
and Minister of Emergency Preparedness



Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A3

Président du Conseil privé du Roi pour le Canada
et ministre de la Protection civile

April 18, 2023

Received by the Clerk of the Senate
April 21, 2023 8:57 am
Reçu par le greffier du Sénat
21 avril 2023 08h57

Mr. Gérard Lafrenière
Interim Clerk of the Senate and Clerk of the Parliaments,
and Chief Legislative Services Officer
Room A-408, 2 Rideau Street
Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A4

Dear Mr. Lafrenière:

Enclosed for tabling in the Senate, pursuant to Standing Order 109, are two copies, in both official languages, of the Government Response to the Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry entitled "*Treading Water: The impacts of and response to the 2021 British Columbia floods*".

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable Bill Blair, P.C., C.O.M., M.P.

Enclosures: (2)



The Honourable Robert Black, Senator
Chair
Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry
Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Dear Senator Black,

I am pleased to provide you with a copy, in both official languages, of the Government Response to the Sixth Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (AGFO) entitled: *Treading Water: The impact of and response to the 2021 British Columbia floods*.

As you may know, flooding continues to be Canada's costliest and most frequent natural disaster. The devastating impacts witnessed by Canadians and experienced by B.C. farmers, food processors and their communities in November 2021 serve as a stark reminder. In the face of this reality, the Government remains committed to collaborating with all orders of government and relevant stakeholders to help ensure the appropriate mitigative actions are taken to reduce the risk of flooding, strengthen climate change resilience, and ensure the necessary recovery measures are in place and resourced when Canadians need them.

The Government agrees with the three recommendations provided by the Committee. The findings of your committee offer important lessons and guidance for disaster and climate change adaptation planning and programming. Responding to the Committee's recommendations provides an opportunity to highlight the substantial work already being undertaken by federal departments and other stakeholders to enhance the resiliency of communities in B.C. as well as those across the country, against future disasters like flooding.

As the Government of Canada continues to engage and support the Province of B.C. in building its resilience to future flooding, it should be kept in mind that the structuring of provincial flood control plans and the prioritizing of related projects are ultimately at the discretion of the provincial government. Accordingly, the nature and scope of the Government's actions taken to date are informed by the *Emergency Management Framework for Canada*.

Please find enclosed a copy of the Government Response to the AGFO report.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Bill Blair, P.C., C.O.M., M.P.
President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness

Enclosure

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS AND STATUS UPDATE

Committee recommendations	Government Response and Status
1 <i>That the Government of Canada collaborate with the Government of British Columbia, other governments in the province and relevant stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for flood control in the Fraser Valley. This plan should include both a timeline for dike upgrades and the establishment of a committee to examine flood mitigation measures, as well as emergency preparedness and response strategies.</i>	The Government of Canada agrees with the recommendation to improve flood control in the Fraser Valley. The Government of Canada also recognizes the urgency in accelerating actions to adapt to changes in the climate—changes that may worsen flood risks in the future. It therefore supports an integrated, systemic approach that encourages collaboration among all orders of government and communities, as outlined in the Senate report. The Government of Canada continues to engage and support the Government of B.C. in developing a comprehensive plan for flood control. How such provincial plans are structured and what projects become prioritized are ultimately at the discretion of the Government of B.C. The Emergency Management Framework for Canada recognizes that provincial and territorial governments have responsibility for emergency management within their respective jurisdictions. The Government is committed to advancing existing areas of work in collaboration with provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous partners. These include: (1) working towards an overarching vision as set out in the NAS; (2) continuing to work collaboratively with B.C. and other relevant stakeholders; (3) supporting climate-adapted planning through studies and codes, standards and guidance; and (4) continuing funding supports for flood adaptation projects. 1. <u>Overarching vision towards resilience</u> The Government is making unprecedented investments in areas related to scaling up resilient communities, guided by the release of the NAS in November 2022. It outlines a shared path for a more climate-resilient Canada across five key systems at the heart of our communities, including infrastructure and disaster resilience. One of the NAS' guiding principles is to take proactive, risk-based measures to reduce climate impacts before they occur, for example through decision-making informed by a robust understanding of climate risks and vulnerabilities. Key transformational goals identified in the NAS released for comment are that, by 2050: • All infrastructure systems in Canada are climate-resilient and undergo continuous adaptation to adjust to future impacts and deliver reliable services to all of society; and that

		- Communities and all people living in Canada are better enabled to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the hazards, risks and consequences of disasters linked to the changing climate; the well-being and livelihoods of people living in Canada are better protected; and overall disaster risks have been reduced, particularly for vulnerable sectors, regions, and populations at greater risk. To help achieve these goals, the NAS sets out medium-term whole-of-society objectives, such as: - There is a measurable reduction of people in Canada impacted by climate-related hazards. - Public and private infrastructure decision-making is informed by system-wide assessments of, and planning for, climate change risks. - All new investments in infrastructure apply resilience criteria and adopt climate change guidance, standards, and future design data to maximize the long-term benefits of infrastructure outcomes. - Infrastructure decisions prioritize benefits for marginalized populations and communities at highest risk of climate change impacts. The release of the NAS was supported by the Government of Canada Adaptation Action Plan. Investments are described further below. <u>2. Working collaboratively with B.C.</u> The Government of Canada is actively engaging with the Government of B.C. through existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to scale up and accelerate the implementation of adaptation measures, building on their leadership within the province. A) Infrastructure Canada (INFC) and B.C. have been collaborating on climate-resilient infrastructure for long-term recovery, rebuild and response measures following the 2021 events, with a particular focus on systems-based approaches. This leading-edge work is creating a practical guidebook to help walk infrastructure decision-makers through systems-based approaches, with concrete examples of what that means within the context of climate resiliency, as well as how to incorporate systems-based approaches into existing tools, like climate risk assessments and prioritization frameworks. This work can help to guide future work and support investments in building long-term resiliency across the area, including the Fraser
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		Valley. B) INFC and B.C. have also collaborated as Co-Chairs, since April 2022, of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Resilient Infrastructure Working Group, which has been bringing together representatives from federal, provincial and territorial governments to accelerate information sharing related to climate-resilient infrastructure by sharing best practices, lessons learned, and expertise in areas of common interest, and exchanging information and ideas on public policies, challenges, barriers, and opportunities – in areas such as, but not limited to, flood mitigation. C) In the NAS, the Government of Canada has committed to develop bilateral adaptation action plans with all provinces and territories to realize collective goals. Bilateral action plans, with respect for jurisdictions and Indigenous rights as their prime guiding principle, will support provincial and territorial adaptation priorities. D) Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), the Government of B.C. and the First Nations Leadership Council have been collaborating to implement the Emergency Management Memorandum of Understanding Technical Emergency Management workplan. The workplan has 10 key activities including: improving emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery supports, increased communications and strengthening collaboration and partnerships while identifying gaps and working together with First Nations solutions. The technical-level working group has First Nation technical emergency management officials from across B.C., including the Fraser Valley working with ISC and B.C. to discuss emerging concerns, considerations, policy and process issues and to undertake and complete items as agreed and to make recommendations on emergency management and climate change adaptation. <u>3. Supporting climate-adapted planning (i.e., science, studies, standards and codes)</u> The Government of Canada is committed to increasing data, evidence and knowledge that supports the creation of guidance, standards, and codes that support and increase climate-adapted planning and management. A) PS is leading the development of a National Risk Profile (NRP) for Canada, which integrates both scientific evidence and input from stakeholders nationwide to
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		improve understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society. The first round of national risk and capability assessment focused on three hazards (earthquakes, wildfires and floods). The NRP will also help substantiate the particular risks faced by various populations, such as Indigenous communities who face disproportionately higher levels of flood risk compared to the rest of Canada, the negative impacts of which can be exacerbated by other factors, such as loss of lands and/or forced displacement. For example, the 2021 atmospheric river event in B.C. impacted 70 First Nations communities, with 15 needing to be partially or fully evacuated. B) ISC will continue to collect and leverage data to make evidence based decisions on response and recovery efforts to meet the unique needs of First Nation communities. The department's Build Back Better policy seeks to strengthen community resilience and reduce the vulnerability of First Nation communities when dealing with emergency events like flooding. Moving forward, ISC is focusing on future events caused by climate change, and how it can support First Nation communities through climate-adapted planning. Collecting and leveraging data that will identify the dangers that First Nation communities may face in the future, allows ISC to assist communities in planning, specifically when recovering from past emergency events. This will ensure less damage, and disruption, to First Nation communities during future emergency events. C) INFC also recognizes that effectively advancing climate resilient infrastructure requires making progress along a supply or 'value chain' moving from knowledge to action. Infrastructure Canada is committed to increasing data, evidence, and knowledge that supports creation of guidance, standards, and codes, which are needed to inform integrated planning capacity and shape capital investment decisions. Climate-adapted codes, standards and guidelines with future oriented data are critical to guide builds for the long-term. D) The GOCAAP included an additional top-up of \$60 million over five years to continue to build on Infrastructure Canada's partnership with the National Research Council (Climate Resilient Built Environment Initiative) and the Standards Council of Canada (Standards to Support Resilience in Infrastructure
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		Program) to advance guidelines, standards and changes to national model codes related to resilient infrastructure. Relevant resources from previous iterations of the program, include: <i>Guidelines to developing standards for flood-resilient existing communities</i>. Future work will look at an array of emergent and interacting hazards, asset types, and innovative risk reduction measures (e.g., hardened flood barriers are becoming understood to be more costly and less effective than nature-based solutions at times). Recent extreme climate events in B.C., and near-term needs in the context of building back, will inform the prioritization of work under these programs (e.g., practical guidance for building infrastructure in such a way that includes projection of flood hazard risks and mitigation of flooding in urban, rural, remote and coastal communities). E) The GOCAAP also included up to \$164.2 million to increase Canada’s resilience to flooding by ensuring that all Canadians have access to free, up-to-date, and authoritative flood-hazard maps. This additional funding will support achievement of one of the proposed national targets for the NAS, currently under review as part of consultation with provincial and territorial governments and national Indigenous organizations, that by 2028, at least 200 out of 250 targeted high-risk areas identified as priorities in collaboration with provinces and territories are covered by new flood hazard maps, produced in accordance with scientific guidance, and made available to Canadians. <u>4. Continuing funding supports</u> As the major funder of public infrastructure projects, the Government of Canada is working to advance climate-resilient infrastructure, deploying unique levers to accelerate Canada’s progress. A) Infrastructure Canada leads federal efforts in providing support – including those that support flood mitigation efforts. Since 2007, Infrastructure Canada has committed over \$61.5 million in 16 projects in the Fraser Valley, with at least five projects targeting dike protection and/or upgrades, and 11 projects addressing flood concerns. Funding for these have been delivered through various contribution programs: ○ Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program; ○ Natural Infrastructure Fund; ○ Building Canada Fund – Communities
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		Component; and ○ Canada Community Building Fund (formerly Gas Tax Fund). Notably since 2018, the DMAF has committed over \$2.29 billion for 81 built and natural infrastructure projects directly helping communities better prepare for and withstand the impact of climate events, prevent infrastructure failures and protect Canadians. DMAF recently funded one project directly relevant to flood mitigation in the Fraser Valley, with \$45 million to the Skwah First Nation and City of Chilliwack for a Flood Protection Project that involves the construction of approximately 6 km of new dikes and flood barriers, a flood gate structure crossing the Hope Slough, and a drainage pump station. The Government will continue to support capital investment projects that include projects like dike enhancement and flood adaptations, as well as other climate-related priorities, as identified by B.C. The GOCAAP included a \$489.1 million top-up to DMAF to make a total available envelope of \$1B as of December 2022. In January 2023, DMAF launched another intake that will be open until July 2023. This funding will continue to help municipalities and townships build new infrastructure to increase the resilience of communities. A) The GOCAAP additionally included a commitment of up to \$530 million to expand the Federation of Canadian Municipalities run Green Municipal Fund, to better support, accelerate, and scale-up community-based adaptation initiatives. B) The Government of Canada provides financial assistance to provincial and territorial governments following large-scale natural disasters through the DFAA, administered by PS. The DFAA permits 15% of eligible recovery costs to be directed towards mitigation.
2	<i>That the Government of Canada ensure that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Public Safety Canada, as well as other federal entities, have sufficient financial and human resources to support individuals, firms and communities affected by natural disasters, including</i>	The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. The Government of Canada provides financial and humanitarian support to individuals, firms and communities through sector-specific business risk management programs administered by AAFC; and assistance to provincial and territorial governments through the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements administered by PS. Additionally, the Government's provided disaster relief through humanitarian support initiatives.

<i>floods. In this context, attention should be paid to the AgriRecovery, AgriStability and disaster financial assistance arrangements programs, among other relevant federal measures. The government should make certain that, both generally and in situations of a natural disaster, federal support – including financial aid, humanitarian relief and personnel – can be accessed easily and in a timely manner.</i>	1. <u>Business Risk Management (BRM) Programs:</u> BRM programs (i.e., AgriInsurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest and AgriRecovery) complement private insurance in the agriculture sector by providing robust supports to producers who may experience damages and loss of income due to natural disasters, such as major flooding. Within the BRM suite of programs, timely access to financial assistance to support recovery operations can be provided through the AgriRecovery framework. AgriRecovery establishes an integrated process to evaluate the impacts of natural disasters on agricultural producers based on a joint assessment by federal, provincial and territorial officials. This assessment determines if producers are incurring extraordinary expenses beyond their capacity to manage that will delay or prevent their ability to resume business as quickly as possible. The AgriRecovery framework enables cost-sharing of initiatives at 60 percent by the federal government and 40 percent by the provincial government. Any AgriRecovery response considers assistance already available to ensure producers are not compensated twice for the same costs, and addresses short-term expenses to further mitigate the impacts on producers. The Government of Canada, in collaboration with the Government of B.C. completed the joint assessment in 80 days, with provincial and federal governments able to make separate announcements on the launch of the initiative on February 7, 2022. To further support producers in B.C., and as reported in the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, the B.C. government, with the federal government's concurrence, increased the 2021 AgriStability (a program used to buffer against large declines in farm income) interim payment percentage from 50% to 75% along with implementing measures that would allow enrolment in the program until 31 December 2022 in order to receive benefits for 2021. Together, the AgriRecovery initiative and special measures under AgriStability have facilitated the flow of financial support to impacted producers to the full extent possible under existing program authorities. A recent review of BRM programming including AgriInsurance, AgriStability, AgriInvest and AgriRecovery (i.e., Report on the Farm Income Protection Act – Sixth Report to Parliament 2017-
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		2021) concluded that these programs continue to be critical in helping producers proactively manage a variety of risks and that the programs were generally successful in achieving this. Improving BRM programs remains a top priority for the Federal Government. On July 22, 2022, FPT Ministers reached an agreement to raise the AgriStability compensation rate from 70% to 80% providing an additional \$72 million per year to better support farmers in times of need. FPT officials are also working together to continue to identify ways to improve the timeliness and predictability of payments where possible. In addition, AAFC, in consultation with provinces and territories, will soon be undertaking a multi-year review to assess how BRM programs can make positive contributions to reducing agriculture's climate change footprint and support farmers in adapting to climate change. This work is taking place as part of the five-year FPT agriculture policy framework established for the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, which enters into force on April 1, 2023. Along with the other processes for periodic assessment of BRM programs, this review will play an important part of evaluating the effectiveness of BRM programs in supporting farmers in a world of expected increasing weather volatility, including potential increased risks of climate-related disasters. 2. <u>Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA):</u> In concert with the sector-specific programming noted above, the DFAA is the main instrument for the Government of Canada to provide financial assistance to provinces and territories following large-scale natural disasters in Canada. In addition to supporting public sector response costs and reconstruction of infrastructure, the DFAA can be used to help fund uninsurable costs related to the restoration, replacement or repairs to individuals' dwellings (principal residence only), as well as buildings and equipment associated with small businesses and farmsteads. Cost-shared funding for response and recovery costs above a per capita threshold is paid to the province or territory, not directly to affected individuals, small businesses or communities. Following a large-scale event, repair and reconstruction can take a significant amount of time to complete and document. To ensure timeliness of financial assistance, provinces or territories may request advance, interim and/or final payments based on the documentation it submits. Under the DFAA, provinces and territories generally have five years to submit their final claim.
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	Since the inception of the program in 1970, the Government of Canada has contributed \$7.6 billion in post-disaster assistance to help provinces and territories with the costs of response and of returning infrastructure and personal property to pre-disaster condition. Approximately 70% of that amount has been paid in the last 10 years alone, and costs within the DFAA continue to rise. Following the November 2021 atmospheric river storm that resulted in severe flooding, landslides, and mudslides across interior and coastal regions of the province, the Province of B.C. estimated their response and recovery costs at \$2.3 billion which would result in a federal share of approximately \$2 billion, of which \$1.03 billion has been paid out. Given the rising costs, frequency, and impacts of disasters in Canada, PS has undertaken a multi-year review to explore how the DFAA could be a more effective, timely, and sustainable instrument for recovery and building resilience for Canadians. This work has included extensive engagement with provinces and territories, including the collection of formal recommendations in fall 2021 from the Canadian Council of Emergency Management Organizations; a PS departmental Audit and Evaluation report (published online in 2022); significant internal research and analysis; and outreach to academics, international partners, and other stakeholders. In early 2022, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness stood up an external Advisory Panel of interdisciplinary experts to provide recommendations on how the DFAA could be a more effective instrument to support recovery, create incentives for disaster risk reduction and build resilience. The Panel finalized its findings in a report provided to the Minister in fall 2022. This report will be made public in Spring 2023. Collectively, the various inputs to the DFAA review have found that while the program serves an essential function in supporting provinces and territories with disaster costs, changes are recommended to modernize the program and improve administrative processes to ensure that support can be easily accessed in a timely manner. In addition, while the DFAA already provides some support for mitigating disaster risk, more can be done to strengthen climate resilience, build back better, and improve recovery outcomes for those disproportionately impacted by disasters. Taking into consideration these findings, PS will continue to work with provinces, territories, and other stakeholders to ensure the DFAA continues to provide timely and accessible recovery funding to help Canadians recover from disasters and
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		to build more resilient communities. 3. <u>Humanitarian Support Initiatives</u> The Government of Canada is providing humanitarian support to affected communities of B.C. through the Donation Matching Commitment with the Canadian Red Cross (CRC). The increasing frequency and severity disasters like the flooding in B.C. in November 2021 has also provided the further impetus for developing the Humanitarian Workforce program. A) The Donation Matching Commitment with the CRC was announced on November 26, 2021, by the Prime Minister and the Premier of B.C. Together the governments of Canada and B.C. announced they would match every dollar donated to the CRC's B.C. Floods & Extreme Weather Appeal to support those affected in the province. The federal government matched donations from individual Canadians and corporations from November 17, 2021 (the day the CRC campaign began) to December 26, 2021. Through this donation matching initiative, the federal government is approximately matching \$33.3 million. This funding is anticipated to be used to support the post-disaster delivery of mental health and psycho-social support, case management, tailored programming for Indigenous communities and the provision of financial assistance to impacted households. Arrangements are underway between the Government of Canada and CRC to finalize a funding agreement for this project. B) The Humanitarian Workforce is a forward looking initiative that seeks to build civilian response capacity across Canada. The program is envisioned to provide funding for the deployment of surge resources for domestic emergency events, such as COVID-19, floods and wildfires, in response to requests for federal assistance. Given the nascency of this initiative, the federal government is currently engaging provinces, territories, Indigenous partners, and other stakeholders in a dialogue on the need for a civilian response capacity.
3	<i>That the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States, or – as required – other governments in the two countries, engage in ongoing discussions about the</i>	The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. In Canada, water resource management is a shared responsibility between the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and in some instances, by the territories and by Indigenous governments under self-government agreements.

<i>management of transboundary waters, including the Nooksack River.</i>	This shared responsibility necessitates close cooperation and collaboration among all levels of government. The Government of Canada is responsible for domestic and international transboundary water management, and has jointly developed and implemented basin-wide action plans in collaboration with the provinces, communities and other stakeholders to help resolve complex environmental issues. Transboundary water management between Canada and the United States is achieved primarily through the Boundary Waters Treaty (BWT), which established the International Joint Commission (IJC) as the mechanism for cooperation and coordination in managing shared waterways, and for investigating environmental issues of mutual interest along the border. The IJC is responsible for approving projects that affect water levels and flows across the boundary, investigating transboundary issues, and recommending solutions. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) officials participate directly on the international water management boards set up under the BWT, provide technical and secretariat support and advice to the IJC, and ensure compliance with IJC orders and with the BWT. ECCC also advises Global Affairs Canada on technical matters relating to the licensing of developments on transboundary waters in accordance with the BWT. The Nooksack River does not flow through Canadian territory and its management does not fall under the scope of the IJC. However, the Government of Canada supports ongoing engagement on the management of the Nooksack River in other water management forums. For example, the governments of B.C. and Washington State participate in the Nooksack River International Task Force (NRITF), a bilateral effort to build a sustained and ongoing transboundary initiative to address Nooksack River flood prevention and response. Federal officials engage with the NRITF's Technical Committee to share information related to flood mapping activities as part of the Government of Canada's Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program. Discussions are ongoing to define the scope for the federal government's further engagement in the NRITF. Additionally, in 2019-20, the City of Abbotsford completed an "Overflow Flood Mitigation Plan" of the Nooksack River. This work was funded by the Province of B.C. and by the Government of Canada's National Disaster Mitigation Program (\$250k total, with a federal contribution of \$125K). The Mitigation Plan shared with the NRITF focused on estimating recurrent flood damages on the Canadian side, developing mitigation options and performing cost-benefit analyses
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		associated with flood mitigation options. The Government of Canada will continue to engage in and support ongoing discussions regarding the management of transboundary waters and the Nooksack River.
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