

June 30, 2017

Andrew Weaver, MLA, Oak Bay-Gordon Head
Parliament Buildings
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Sent by email: andrew.weaver.mla@leg.bc.ca

Dear Mr. Weaver

Re: Provincial cabinet organization and emergency preparedness

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, congratulations to your party on a hard-fought election campaign.

This is an exciting and important time for British Columbia, and the next government's forthcoming cabinet decisions are of the utmost importance. The significant flood events that are currently occurring throughout the province are the latest demonstration of the need for increased investment in efforts that build resiliency and better prepare individuals and communities for the risks they face. As organizations committed to proactive action on emergency preparedness and building resiliency to a changing climate, we would like to highlight the importance that any new government must place in ensuring that British Columbians are protected from natural disaster.

As our climate changes, the frequency and severity of extreme weather events is on the rise, and is having an increasing impact on individuals across the country. Insured losses due to severe weather, which averaged \$400 million annually until 2009, have been at or exceeded \$1 billion every year since. In fact, 2016 set a new record for insured losses in Canada due to severe weather, totalling \$5.2 billion, driven by the Fort McMurray wildfire. Governments are also bearing the increasing costs, with federal disaster assistance payments totalling over \$600 million annually, 74% of which is due to flood. Dwarfing both of these would be the impact of a major earthquake striking southwestern BC, the likelihood of which continues to grow as we better understand its nature.

Clearly, the risk facing BC from events such as a major earthquake, flood and wildfire is on the rise, and ensuring a robust disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness program has never been more important to the safety of all British Columbians. To respond to this increasing need, the next government's cabinet must retain a Ministry, or Ministry of State, for Emergency Preparedness. A dedicated Minister responsible for emergency preparedness will help ensure a robust emergency preparedness program, and closely aligns with the recommendations made previously by British Columbia's Auditor General, as well as Henry Renteria in the BC Earthquake Consultant Report.

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The new government must also increase financial and other resources for both climate change mitigation and adaptation. As our climate changes, BC is experiencing a new weather reality, and the impact this is having on individuals across the province reinforces the need to improve our resiliency, to better understand the risks we face, and to increase and reap the benefits of investments in adaptation measures to help communities respond. Specific measures include increased support at the local level for better land use planning and floodplain mapping, improvements in flood resilience infrastructure, restoration of natural capital, and increased investment in storm and waste water infrastructure. Efforts must be extended broadly such that climate adaptation and low-carbon thinking is included in all future infrastructure planning, and a robust public education and communication campaign should be undertaken to inform British Columbians about the risks they face and the steps they can take to better prepare.

All government ministries must consider emergency preparedness and climate adaptation in their long-term planning. Ministries responsible for emergency preparedness and the environment have clear links to adaptation, but other ministries should also prepare for the impacts they will experience, such as new and expanded health risks, changing infrastructure and land use implications, and new opportunities and challenges for trade and the economy. Integrating adaptation across ministries will ensure a consistent approach across government, increase efficiency, and maximize communities' resilience to risk.

Congratulations again on your success in the last election. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these important issues further, and our contact information is provided below.

Sincerely,

The undersigned, in alphabetical order:

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