



Mayor Gord Milsom
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Date: February 27, 2025

TO: The Honourable Ravi Parmar,
Minister of Forests

FROM: Mayor Gord Milsom, Mayor of the City of West Kelowna, BC

Simplify and Increase Provincial Funding for Wildfire Mitigation

OBJECTIVE:

- 1. Meaningful increase in provincial funding dollars allocated to local government to perform wildfire mitigation work on public and private land.**
- 2. Streamline and simplify the allocation process for these funds, moving away from onerous grant programs towards a stable, multi-year allocation.**

Key Points:

- We continue to face devastating wildfire events year after year and the risk of these events continues to climb. West Kelowna became an international example in the summer of 2023.
- Wildfire mitigation is considered as activities that manage the destructive potential of wildfire. These activities take place “on-the-ground” to prescribe and undertake the physical work to remove debris, thin stands and decrease potential fire intensity.
- The province spends hundreds of millions of dollars on wildfire suppression, yet the amount dedicated to local governments for wildfire prevention and mitigation via the Community Resiliency Investment Grant is exponentially smaller and does not meet the needs and demands of our provincially mandated Community Wildfire Resiliency plan.
- In April 2024, the Premier’s Expert Task Force on Emergencies called the FireSmart program a “success story” but recommended “building capacity to expedite wildfire risk reduction projects” and “streamline administrative requirements, and providing more year-over-year certainty for communities applying for FireSmart funding”

We respectfully acknowledge our presence on the traditional territory of the syilx/Okanagan Peoples.

- While improvements are being made to existing provincial grant programs, the process remains onerous and resource intensive and does not allow for long-term planning.
- Since 2009, the City of West Kelowna has undertaken several grant-funded projects, public education and FireSmart initiatives. As a proactive and forward-thinking community, the City of West Kelowna has emerged as a leading organization among local governments in the field of wildland urban interface firefighting operations and hazard mitigation.
- The projects that are funded today are merely a drop in the bucket when compared to the scope and scale of devastating wildfires. We need to be doing more on a much larger scale.
- West Kelowna recently completed its provincially mandated “Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan”. The primary objective of the plan was to develop achievable and strategic action items.
- The plan identified and prioritized 72 fuel treatment units (encompassing 995 hectares). In addition, community critical infrastructure at 18 sites was assessed and scored for further mitigation. Approximate costs to complete work at all the sites could exceed \$10 million.

Our Request:

A provincially funded pilot project in West Kelowna (possibly working in partnership with Westbank First Nation) to provide 5 years of stable funding (\$1 million per year) for the top priority wildfire mitigation projects on public and private land as outlined in our recently adopted **2025 Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan**.

Sincerely,



His Worship Gord Milsom
Mayor of the City of West Kelowna

cc: Macklin McCall, MLA for West Kelowna-Peachland
West Kelowna Council
Chief Administrative Officer, Ron Bowles, City of West Kelowna

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