



STATEMENT

Message from Mayor Braun to Abbotsford Residents Update on November flooding events for Abbotsford residents

February 1, 2022

In the weeks since the floodwaters started receding across Sumas Prairie, the City of Abbotsford has been working hard on assessing and repairing the damage left behind.

In December, Abbotsford City Council stood up a Recovery team, which includes City staff whose sole purpose is to rebuild our community back even better than it was before. This Recovery team is developing both a short-term and long-term Recovery Strategy that will carry us over the period of the next few months to years of recovery.

While we talk about recovery, in many ways, the City of Abbotsford is still in response mode as we deal with the aftermath of the flooding and 16 landslides. Since December, City crews, contractors and consultants have been hard at work identifying, assessing and recommending repair strategies for over 300 individual sites damaged during the floods. The size and scope of each repair project varies and includes things like rebuilding bridges, replacing 1,100 metres of water main, fixing roads, parks and trails, and managing debris. Presently, of the 300+ identified sites, 130 have been fully repaired, or have temporary measures installed. Our Recovery team is actively working on plans to have the remaining sites actioned and is working closely with our insurance company in order to continue to make progress.

But more needs to be done and much of that is outside of what the City can do. Last year's flooding disaster highlighted the importance of senior levels of government making long-term investments in renewing the infrastructure that's already in our communities. I have talked to the Prime Minister, Premier and Deputy Premier about our needs and will keep talking about it and impressing on senior levels of government just how much help is needed. I've also written letters to both the Prime Minister and Premier reiterating these pleas for help. As a community, we need extensive financial help to upgrade our infrastructure. I continue to have discussions with various Ministers, MLAs and MPs about our needs. I also continue to work with the BC Urban Mayors' Caucus to push for change, especially with how municipalities receive funding. Municipalities are just not set up to meet the financial requirements to support infrastructure needs our communities have and we need a new fiscal framework.

This important advocacy work doesn't stop here in B.C. Along with MLA Rick Glumac, who is the province's representative to Washington State, I was invited to meet with government leaders from Washington State to discuss priorities and opportunities for flood prevention moving forward. Following that meeting, there were some stories about Whatcom County's flood hazard reduction programs and the potential impacts on Abbotsford. As a result, Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu has released a [statement](#) to address what they believe are "significant inaccuracies" shared by Canadian publications. While our flooding is a local issue, addressing it is a provincial and federal issue and it is not an easy fix. As governments of all levels in both countries look for solutions, what's clear is that there is no easy or quick fix. I, along with City staff, will continue advocating for our community's needs to senior levels of government.

In the weeks following the flooding, I met with many farmers one-on-one in person on their farms. I was able to do this up until I became aware of a proposed Class Action lawsuit initiated on behalf of all of the impacted property owners on Sumas Prairie. Though as a result I'm advised not to meet with residents on this topic until this is resolved, I read your emails and I see your comments on social media. Your stories are heart wrenching and weigh on me. It's these stories that fill my mind each time I speak, and led me to break down at times during my updates last year. I know many individuals are frustrated with getting Disaster Funding Assistance. You need help and want to know what's happening so you can move forward and rebuild as you see fit and you are disappointed that you have not received funding yet. I empathize with this and also recognizing that with such a major disaster impacting a number of B.C. communities, this takes time for this provincial government service to assess and provide support.

While you may not see my face in front of a camera each day, I want Abbotsford residents to know, our work at the City of Abbotsford still continues, I hear you and I will continue to advocate on your behalf.

Henry Braun
Mayor, City of Abbotsford

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