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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2023EMCR0022-000629  
April 28, 2023

Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate  
Readiness

### **Flood mitigation framework, projects make Abbotsford region more resilient**

ABBOTSFORD – A significant multi-government agreement to make Sumas Prairie more resilient to flooding was signed on Friday, April 28, 2023, by the Province, Semá:th, Matsqui and Leq'á:mel First Nations, the City of Abbotsford and the City of Chilliwack.

The Sumas River Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework will support the design of mitigation projects in the Sumas River watershed and timely delivery of watershed recovery programs that benefit people and the farming community and protect infrastructure.

“The atmospheric river events of November 2021 resulted in devastating flooding of the Sumas Prairie, impacting the lives and livelihood of everyone in Abbotsford and cutting the Lower Mainland off from the rest of the province and country,” said Bowinn Ma, Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. “We know we can’t keep doing things the way we’ve done them before if we want to protect the region from future catastrophic flooding. We’re confronting the realities of climate change head on in partnership with local governments and First Nations in ways that incorporate Indigenous knowledge into flood-mitigation planning.”

The agreement sets out a framework for all partners to work efficiently and collaboratively toward solutions and approaches to address the challenge of flooding risks. The Province is providing more than \$4 million to support the framework, which includes a technical team of experts to share knowledge and advice on best practices for flood-risk mitigation.

Additionally, there will be upgrades to Abbotsford’s Barrowtown pump station, which was overwhelmed by floodwaters from the nearby Sumas and Nooksack rivers when a series of atmospheric rivers inundated the Fraser Valley in November 2021. These upgrades are among 10 projects receiving a combined \$8.48 million from the Province, including repairs to infrastructure, such as roads and the Sumas dike.

The Barrowtown pump station was originally designed to protect the catchment area of Sumas Prairie east from the Sumas River, but the November 2021 event overwhelmed the station. Funding will enable the design and construction of a flood wall to protect the pump station, including its electrical system.

The City of Abbotsford is receiving \$3.2 million for the Barrowtown pump station flood-protection upgrades and \$5.28 million for additional recovery projects.

Three backgrounders follow.

**Contact:**

Ministry of Emergency Management and  
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## BACKGROUND 1

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### **What people are saying about the flood preparation framework**

#### **Chief Dalton Silver, Semá:th First Nation –**

“S’ólh Téméxw te íkw’elò. Xólhmet te mekw stám ít kwelát – This is our land. We have to take care of everything that belongs to us. Joining in this multi-government agreement is a small but significant step in the right direction for us to have a say in the management of our land, S’ólh Téméxw. Our ancestors have always emphasized the importance of taking care of our land, as it is the foundation of our people’s existence. By participating in this agreement, we are exercising our inherent right, taking a role in shaping a better place for future generations. This is just the beginning, but we are hopeful that this agreement will serve as a foundation for more collaborative efforts between different levels of government, and we will continue to work towards a sustainable and prosperous future for S’ólh Téméxw.”

#### **Chief Alice Thompson, Leq’a:mel First Nation –**

“Leq’a:mel is pleased to play an equal role in the collective recovery, mitigation and protection of Sumas Prairie. This collaborative framework brings together First Nations, local and provincial governments in an innovative approach founded in a respect for and recognition of our Indigenous rights, both as individual First Nations and as a collective. Leq’a:mel exercises our rights, title and jurisdiction over Aylechootlook Indian Reserve Number 5, located in close proximity to the Barrowtown pump station. As we recover from the atmospheric river events and develop a long-term flood mitigation plan for this area, this framework will ensure Leq’a:mel values, lands and infrastructure are identified and protected, will build collective knowledge, capacity and resilience, and promote shared decision-making.”

#### **Chief Alice McKay, Matsqui First Nation –**

“We here in Matsqui are pleased with the actions that are being taken. Emergency preparedness can only be realized through collaborative planning measures involving all levels of government. Environmental events do not discriminate in their destruction, and we must all work together now to ensure we are better prepared to support our emergency responders for the next test Mother Nature chooses to put in front of us.”

#### **Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food and MLA for Abbotsford-Mission –**

“The atmospheric rivers of November 2021 were unprecedented and the impacts on Abbotsford and local farmers and food producers were widespread and devastating, but our work to build back stronger and more resilient continues. These investments are vital to local infrastructure and the people of the Fraser Valley to ensure we’re better prepared for extreme weather in the future.”

**Bruce Ralston, Minister of Forests –**

“Several communities in southern B.C. are still recuperating from the extraordinary floods in 2021. It is vital that the Province is a meaningful partner in the recovery and the work to help reduce the likelihood and consequences of future floods. Working with First Nations and the cities of Abbotsford and Chilliwack, we are taking meaningful steps on flood recovery and increasing the resiliency of the Sumas Prairie to effectively weather future flooding and the effects of climate change.”

**Rick Glumac, Premier’s liaison for the Pacific Northwest –**

“The 2021 atmospheric river has had a profound impact on the residents of the Fraser Valley. As we move forward, the Province is leading intergovernmental flood-mitigation efforts, including with Washington state where the flooding originated. We are committed to ensuring that people are supported, and communities are prepared as we continue to face new experiences of climate change.”

**Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship –**

“The widespread flooding in the Fraser Valley caused significant damage, impacted thousands of British Columbians, and underlined the need to mitigate flooding risks in the region. This support for crucial repairs will help residents face the future with renewed confidence and also help restore important fish habitat and ecosystem functions.”

**Dan Coulter, Minister of State for Infrastructure and Transit and MLA for Chilliwack –**

“These flood recovery projects are part of our focus to build back better after the devastating atmospheric river of 2021, and to make sure British Columbia’s infrastructure is strong, resilient and reliable for the new climate reality that we are in. This resiliency will help keep people in the Fraser Valley and around the province safe from extreme weather events.”

**Ross Siemens, mayor of Abbotsford –**

“I want to thank the Province, and the Semá:th, Mathxwí and Leq’á:mel First Nations for coming together for the Sumas River Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework, and the provincial government for its attention to important recovery and restoration projects. The 2021 flood was a devastating event for people and businesses in Abbotsford and the road to recovery has been and continues to be long. With assistance from the Province, we are getting our community back on its feet and restoring infrastructure, while we continue to work with local First Nations and senior levels of government to rebuild.”

**Ken Popove, mayor of Chilliwack –**

“We know that flooding doesn’t recognize municipal borders, so the City of Chilliwack is pleased to be a part of the Sumas River Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework. Working together, our governments will be able to effectively establish and implement strategies to move our communities forward and better prepare for future events.”

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## BACKGROUND 2

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### **Facts about 2021 flooding, risk management**

- The floods of November 2021 were the most expensive natural disaster in B.C.'s history with catastrophic impacts to communities, the economy and critical infrastructure.
- More than 1,250 farms in the Abbotsford area account for close to \$1 billion in annual receipts and support about 5,500 jobs.
- Forty kilometres of flood protection dikes and 16 pumps on the Sumas Prairie currently assist with flood mitigation.
- Since 2017, the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) has funded more than 1,500 disaster risk reduction projects throughout B.C., totalling more than \$185 million in provincial funds.
- This includes \$145 million to approximately 380 flood risk reduction projects.
- EMCR and the Ministry of Forests are investing \$8.69 million for flood-hazard mapping, including funding to support B.C.'s Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy.
- The Province is investing more than \$38 million over the next six years to collect light detection and ranging (LiDAR) elevation data, giving B.C. communities access to high-quality data to support decision-making about planning and management of wildfires, landslides, floods and other natural events.
- In February 2023, the Province provided an additional investment of \$180 million to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) for the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) to support Indigenous and local governments in preparing for and mitigating current and future disaster risk, including flood risk.
- This and other new investments in CEPF bring the total provincial investment in CEPF to \$369 million since its establishment in 2017 and adds another two years of intakes to the CEPF program.

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## BACKGROUND 3

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### **Abbotsford flood recovery projects**

The City of Abbotsford is receiving \$3.2 million for the Barrowtown pump station flood-protection upgrades and \$5.28 million for additional recovery projects.

- Matsqui Prairie-McClennan Creek – Repair erosion and damage to the creek slope and embankments;
- Clayburn Creek – Engineering study on mitigation measures;
- Ivy Court – Repair to slope erosion as required;
- Cariboo Court – Repair to slope erosion and damage to property adjacent to creek;
- Ash Street – Repairs to slope and storm sewer;
- McKee Road – Slope repair and stabilization; material and debris removal;
- Mount Lehman Cemetery – Slope repair, erosion control measures, and debris removal;
- Latimer Road – Road and slope repairs; material and debris removal; and
- Sumas Dike, multiple sites – Material and debris removal; dike repairs.

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