



Reference: 281219

March 13, 2025

VIA EMAIL: hilary.erasmus@rdffg.bc.ca

Lara Beckett, Chair
Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
155 George Street
Prince George, British Columbia
V2L 1P8

Dear Lara Beckett:

Thank you for your letter of February 20, 2025, to Honourable Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests, regarding Cooperative Community Wildfire Response (CCWR). I have been asked to respond.

The main goals of the CCWR model are to:

- Understand and support the development of Indigenous and rural non-Indigenous community wildfire preparedness and response capacity.
- Develop pathways, building on what already exists, for both Indigenous and rural, non-Indigenous community wildfire response, in cooperation with the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS).
- Acknowledge and highlight local and traditional knowledge and experience in fire management.
- Improve engagement and cooperation between communities and the BC Wildfire Service and local authorities.

The Regional District Cooperative Community Wildfire Response Organization is one avenue for community participation in wildfire preparedness and response but is not the only pathway for participation.

At a high level BCWS has been involved in working with community-based resources for years, re: deploying local citizens as emergency fire fighters etc., and our regional offices generally know who these people are. For the most part, and at its simplest level, the CCWR model is one that provides funding to support activities in communities to enhance training, build wildfire activity awareness, for relationship building and, a vehicle help to organize resources and improve effectiveness of community response.

We recognize there are changes to the funding aspect of the community response model that

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affect local governments. Our main priority is to enhance community resilience across British Columbia.

This is an iterative process, and to this end, I would value the opportunity to get your perspective on CCWR and its intent. To facilitate a meaningful conversation, if there is interest on your end, we would like to set up a meeting with the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) to discuss barriers and gaps, as well as opportunities within the Regional District Cooperative Community Wildfire Response Organization program.

While the funding model is a joint program with the Union of BC Municipalities and there may be limitations to change for this current intake, activation and management of response groups within the RDFFG can be discussed.

Please let me know if you would like to meet and I can start to arrange a pre-season meeting to address the concerns you have highlighted.

Sincerely,



David Greer
Executive Director
BC Wildfire Service

pc: Honourable Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests



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Municipalities:

McBride
Mackenzie
Prince George
Valemount

Electoral Areas:

Chilako River-Nechako
Crooked River-Parsnip
Robson Valley-Canoe
Salmon River-Lakes
Tabor Lake-Stone Creek
Willow River-Upper Fraser
Woodpecker-Hixon

February 20, 2025

Hon. Ravi Parmar
Minister of Forests
Province of BC

FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Parmar,

Re: Cooperative Community Wildfire Response (CCWR) Program

The Board of Directors for the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (the Regional District) recently reviewed the changes to the Cooperative Community Wildfire Response (CCWR) program and wishes to share feedback.

The Regional District's Emergency Preparedness Service is region wide and is responsible for fulfilling local government requirements under the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* and regulations. This encompasses the strategic and operational deployment of emergency management plans which outlines the authority and responsibility of the Regional District in an emergency. As a region wide service, delivery of services and costs are shared amongst all participating electoral areas.

The provincial government is responsible for prevention, mitigation, response and recovery from wildfires and all wildfire related activity. Areas outside of fire protection areas are solely BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) responsibility. The establishment of CCWRs is an important aspect of ensuring that communities are knowledgeable and prepared for an emerging wildfire event, especially in areas where there is no volunteer fire department. CCWR groups have and will work directly with BCWS Zone office staff, as BCWS will continue to direct, coordinate and supervise these individuals. Regional Districts have not had any authority to deploy, direct or manage a CCWR.

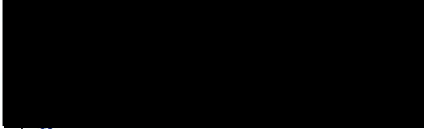
The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George does not have the capacity or resources to absorb such a dynamic initiative. The Regional District is concerned that there has been a lack of engagement and discussion prior to changes being made to the program and once the program was established. The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George has not had the opportunity to discuss or provide feedback to the Province on the following:

- staffing and administrative resources
- budget resources
- best practices for managing CCWRs
- process, responsibilities and reporting should BCWS deploy a CCWR
- risks and potential liabilities

The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George is committed to ensuring the longevity and long-term livability of our communities; however, focus needs to be placed on ensuring resources are aimed at fulfilling requirements under the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* and regulations.

With the program being promoted as “pilot” and “optional”, we hope that there will be a more robust engagement process that will result in reasonable and practical solutions prior to further decisions regarding the program being made.

Respectfully,



Lara Beckett
Chair, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George

Cc: Hon. Brittany Anderson, Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities
Hon. Kelly Greene, Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness
Regional Districts