

Date: TBA

To: The Honorable David Eby

Premier of British Columbia

Office of the Premier

PO Box 9041 STN Prov Gov't

Victoria BC V8W 9E1

Province of British Columbia

Re: Provincial leadership needed for orphan dike responsibility and long-term flood protection

Dear Premier

We, the undersigned First Nations, Municipal, and Regional District governments across British Columbia, are writing to collectively express our deep concern regarding the condition, safety risks, and lack of governance surrounding orphan dikes, many of which are located on Crown land.

British Columbia has more than 100 orphan dikes structures, totaling approximately 85km in length, however, there is no identified diking authority, no responsible owner, and no long-term maintenance plan. Many of these dikes were constructed during historical emergency events without engineering standards and now fail to meet provincial safety requirements.

The Fraser Basin Council's provincial risk assessment, funded by the Province, confirmed widespread deficiencies and highlighted the significant risk these structures pose to communities, yet no long-term strategy or provincial stewardship program has followed.

The Province is stating that the responsibility for orphan dikes lies with local governments. However, orphan dikes, especially those on Crown land, fall outside any jurisdiction, leaving communities vulnerable. An example is the 2021 failure of the Similkameen River orphan dike, which resulted in severe flooding and property damage. The failure of the orphan dike is evidence of the real danger posed when no authority is responsible for these structures.

First Nations and local governments cannot assume responsibility for these assets. The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and provincial reviews clearly state that the costs of restoring, upgrading, and maintaining orphan dikes far exceed the financial capacity of local jurisdictions.

Compounding this, a dike failure presents a direct risk to life safety, homes, agricultural land, transportation networks, and community infrastructure. Fragmented responsibility and unclear

ownership are unacceptable given the risks. A single point of responsibility is necessary to ensure consistent standards, proper engineering oversight, and effective emergency response.

Accordingly, we formally request that the Province of British Columbia:

1. Assume full responsibility for all orphan dike.
2. Establish and fund in conjunction with a provincial orphan dike management program including upgrades, rehabilitation, and long-term maintenance.
3. Ensure the program includes stable, predictable provincial funding for ongoing operations and emergency preparedness.
4. Designate a single accountable provincial authority for oversight and maintenance of these structures.
5. Engage in meaningful collaboration with First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts throughout implementation.

We urge the Province to take immediate action to address these longstanding safety and governance gaps and to protect the lives, property, and economies of communities throughout the province.

We look forward to your leadership and stand ready to collaborate on this critical matter.

Respectfully,

[Signing First Nations / Municipal / Regional District]

[Names and Titles of Authorized Representatives]