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APR 03 2013
REGIONAL DISTRICT OF
NORTH OKANAGAN

March 27, 2013

Mr. Patrick Nicol
Chair
Regional District of North Okanagan
9848 Aberdeen Road
Coldstream BC V1B 2K9

Dear Mr. Nicol:

As the provincial and local governments in British Columbia undertake preparations for the upcoming freshet, I would like to take the opportunity to underscore the importance of an integrated response when flooding occurs.

Flooding during 2012 created challenges for numerous communities across British Columbia, and strained the resources of many agencies tasked with managing flood response and flood recovery. Regional Districts and small municipalities face particular challenges, as many simply do not have the resources available to conduct extended flood emergency management activities.

As you know, these challenges have led some local governments to signal that their staff will no longer conduct or participate in flood response activities. Unfortunately, the withdrawal from this function by any local government will leave a critical gap in emergency management services for residents impacted by flooding, as the province simply does not have the structure or capacity to undertake local flood response. Local authority responsibility for emergency management, including the hazard of flooding, is clearly established in the *Emergency Program Act* (Section 6). It is not appropriate or practical for local authorities to step back from their responsibility to manage this hazard.

There is however, an important and defined role for the province in flood response. Two key principles of the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS), the system used by the province and most local authorities to organize emergency management activities, are those of an integrated response and support for local authorities by the province when local resources are overwhelmed. I believe the 2012 flooding experience has shown us that we need to work together to develop more robust supports for local authorities with respect to flood response and recovery.

Mr. Patrick Nicol
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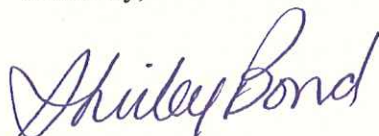
To this end, I have asked Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC), to work closely with the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and individual local authorities to develop new ways for the province to support local authorities, especially regional districts and small municipalities, during flood response and recovery. A dedicated project manager position, likely to be filled through a secondment from a local authority, will work to identify specific problems and solutions. With input from local authorities, I expect that an initial product will be an emergency response and recovery “playbook” to help guide local authorities through complex emergency response and recovery operations. I have also asked how the province can fund and enable local authorities to more expediently tap into pre-qualified subject matter experts and emergency managers, and how the province can assist local authorities in supporting one another. In short, the province will be working with local authorities to determine how greater support can be accessed.

Ms. Rebecca Denlinger, the Assistant Deputy Minister/Fire and Emergency Management Commissioner, will be seeking input from Regional District Board Chairs on the above initiative on March 20, 2013. Electoral Area directors have also recently been asked for their input.

I know that by working together on an integrated flood response, built on jointly developed solutions, we can continue to meet our joint responsibilities to provide the high standard of emergency management that our citizens expect.

I welcome your feedback on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shirley Bond". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shirley Bond
Minister of Justice
and Attorney General

pc: Rebecca Denlinger