



WILDFIRE RECOVERY

Cariboo Regional District Recovery Management Report

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MASUN communications

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Cariboo Regional District Recovery Management Report

Cariboo Regional District recovery management activities, gap analysis & transition opportunities.

Summary

The Cariboo is located in the British Columbia central interior and consists of 12 electoral areas and four incorporated municipalities; 100 Mile House, Quesnel, Wells and Williams Lake. The region covers an area of just over 80,000 square kilometres, is home to 15 First Nations communities and an estimated 60,000 full-time residents.

A state of local emergency was declared by the Cariboo Regional District (CRD) in early July 2017 in response to wildfire activity. This enabled the implementation of a regional and provincial emergency response, and the activation of an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in line with the CRD's emergency management planning.

The wildfires of 2017 affected half of the region directly and caused

- 48% of the Cariboo Regional District population to be evacuated,
- impacts on 58% of the land base: environmental damages to resources and habitat, ecosystem stability,
- 77 days of evacuation orders and alerts, starting July 6 and ending September 20,
- structural losses (homes, personal effects, outbuildings, tools and equipment),
- business interruption across all sectors, some tourism and other seasonal businesses reporting a total financial loss,
- significant use of community halls and fire halls to support shelter in place, and
- exhausted local resources: volunteers, search and rescue, fire fighters, emergency social services, response staff.

Following the rescinding of all evacuation alerts and orders, the EOC deactivated, and the CRD fully transitioned to the final response stage of community disaster recovery in accordance with the CRD base plan and British Columbia's Emergency Program Act.

CRD recovery management activities included public engagement, situational analysis, resource reviews, and outreach activities to understand impacts and refer individuals to appropriate recovery solutions while identifying resource short falls across the various and distinct Cariboo communities.

The identification and communication of service gaps, or unmet needs, in recovery resources is intended to bring focus to underserved areas, to facilitate mid- and long-term recovery, and support community resiliency throughout the Cariboo region.

This report provides an overview of the Cariboo Regional District's recovery response to the wildfires of 2017:

- the activities and actions of the CRD Recovery Manager,
- early identified recovery needs and general trends,
- an overview of recovery program solutions and resources,
- short term recovery program gaps, and
- long term planning forward and lessons learned.

What is Recovery?

Recovery is a phase of provincially legislated emergency management and response, initiating actions toward easing community challenges and reducing suffering related to disasters.

In simple terms, recovery refers to the coordination of steps taken in the short, mid- and long-term to support the return to a new normal state after disaster.

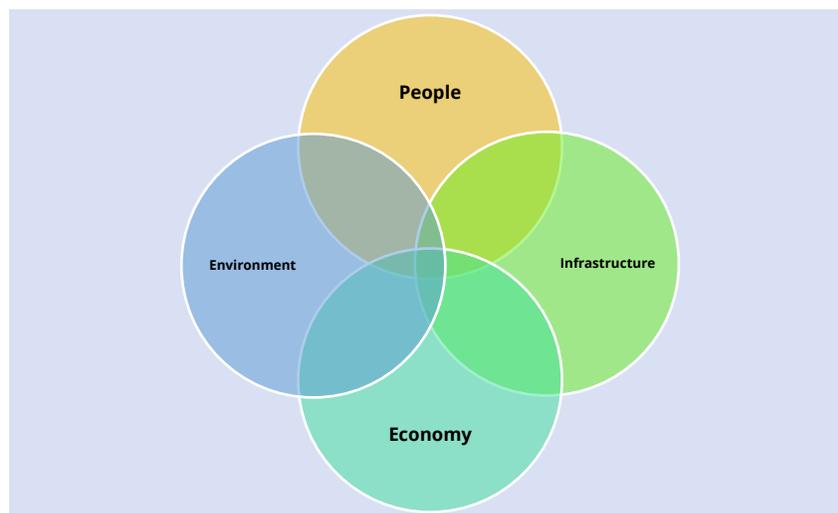
The recovery phase starts in the EOC; assessing the impacts of the incident, improving re-entry, and supporting the return to day-to-day activities and business resumption.

In application, recovery is not simple. The need for, and depth of, recovery actions will be determined by the scope of the event, the vulnerability of the population, and the accessibility and timeliness of resources available for the recovery phase.

Setting the Recovery Stage

Recovery planning, management and action primarily focus on four intersecting spheres: people, economy, environment and infrastructure.

Figure 1. Recovery focus areas



Over the course of the summer of 2017, wildfires impacted every aspect of day-to-day activities across the Cariboo:

- economic development & business transactions
- disruptions to the transportation of goods & people
- real-estate & car sales
- insurance policy purchasing
- equipment rentals
- interruptions to seasonal forestry, mining, tourism, agricultural operations
- trapping, fishing, hunting, gathering
- pressures of shelter in place
- interrupted vacation plans
- displaced livestock, pets, family members & tourists
- delays to school re-opening dates
- road closures & re-routed air travel
- the presence of military & additional police forces
- reduced levels of service delivery to seniors and persons with special needs
- damage to property and investments
- reduced access to lakes, trails and backcountry

Each of these, overlaid by communication complications and delays, significantly added to the stress of threat by fire, environmental or infrastructure damage; the wildfire season impacted the entire region in some way.

Recovery is the process through which Cariboo individuals, families, communities, municipalities and regions collaborate and coordinate to return to acceptable living conditions, business and daily routines after a disaster such as this.

Key Recovery Concepts

Through data collection, environmental scanning and strategic planning, recovery goals are developed to address the current and long-term impacts of the incident.

Overarching recovery concepts enable community return to self sufficiency through:

- Incident specific actions to address immediate needs
- Working with community leadership to facilitate transition between response and recovery phases through fostering coordination and collaborations
- Resiliency building; building better preparedness for future disasters and adaptability after emergency event challenges (build back smarter & do no harm)
- Short to long-term recovery planning and capturing lessons learned

Short, Mid & Long-Term Recovery

Recovery is approached through a series of short, medium and long-term actions. Short term is defined up to the first five months, medium term is 6 to 12 months post event, and long term is one year later and beyond.

Maintaining a long-term view assists in returning to normal operations and ensures that recovery approaches meet the unique requirements of stakeholder groups over the course of time. Unmet needs will emerge in the long run indicating program short falls.

Addressing unmet needs with community-based solutions best position populations and economies for building resilience and preparedness for transitioning forward.

Community driven projects perpetuates momentum long after provincial and federal recovery funding is exhausted and CRD recovery planning supports the coordination of these projects.

Early Recovery Activities

Emergency Social Service Reception & Resiliency Centres were established to support evacuation and re-entry to rural areas and municipalities as part of the coordinated early recovery response.

The main objective of these centres was to provide temporary relief and to support immediate recovery needs for evacuees. Combined with aide from international relief agencies and provincial disaster psychological services, many local organizations, volunteers, and donors were engaged in these early efforts to ease communities back.

In addition, the Canadian Red Cross Society (CRC) established a presence within the first five days of the event and set up reception centres to assist in longer term supports and service provision. The Canadian federal government, the Province of BC and generous donors directed funding to the CRC to secure recovery programming, financial aide, and case management services in the region for the next two years.

To ensure that communities were prepared for re-entry, the Regional District took measures to assess safety, services, utilities, and damages to mitigate risks and vulnerabilities.

To further these local recovery efforts, the CRD contracted a Recovery Manager to engage with residents, liaise with local and provincial services, assist information exchange, assess recovery needs and match these with on the ground and accessible solutions.

Cariboo Regional District Community Recovery Management

The CRD Recovery Manager gathered qualitative and quantitative information to better understand how recovery processes and resources are organized, accessed, developed and distributed around the region, throughout communities and to the individual residents that need them.

Preliminary Needs Assessments & Environmental Scanning

The Recovery Manager surveyed and assessed preliminary needs to better understand the full scope of fire impacts on area residents.

Email, phone and face-to-face engagements were the most effective approaches to gathering detailed information and drawing out the current environment's big picture to begin developing recovery goals and necessary short, mid and long-term actions.

Cariboo Regional District Community Consultations

Between October 29 and December 11, 2017, the Recovery Manager was present at each of the CRD's community consultations in 22 communities throughout the region with over 750 people attending. These sessions offered several opportunities:

- face to face debrief at recovery stations
- promotion of the Recovery Manager's contact information and role
- a chance to assess needs based on early engagement and feedback
- data collection informing the basis of a preliminary recovery needs assessment

The intent of the community consultation sessions was primarily to collect feedback on communications and to identify opportunities to improve future emergency planning and crisis communications. Recovery emerged as a recurring theme at all but one of the sessions.

Community members attending these events identified early recovery needs such as:

- resolving challenges in accessing adequate Red Cross supports or funding,
- financial assistance needed for businesses, uninsured re-fencing costs, out-building and equipment/tool replacement, day-to-day essentials,
- animal needs and care challenges,
- challenges measuring losses and resolving insurance claims,
- difficulty navigating systems (where to find information), and
- firewood.

Facebook Live Event

As part of the community consultation and review process, the CRD hosted a Facebook Live event with over 650 participants with the Recovery Manager available to field questions. Very few inquiries were sent forward through this channel identifying specific needs, likely due to the private nature of recovery.

Direct contacts were made with the Recovery Manager after the event to discuss personal recovery needs indicating this event was successful in communicating contact details.

Cariboo Regional District Community Consultation Online Survey

1,209 people responded to the online community consultation survey and were informed of the Recovery Manager role. Survey outcomes provided insights and data to inform recovery planning forward.

A few respondents called and emailed the Regional District with feedback on the survey and these were routed to the Recovery Manager for further discussions and resource referrals.

Recovery Communications & Outcomes

Early stakeholder and sector identification included Non-Government Recovery Organizations like Canadian Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, Mennonite Disaster Service and:

- Municipalities
- First Nations
- Rural Communities
- Province of BC
- Federal Government
- Media
- Agriculture
- Retail
- Mining
- Forestry
- Tourism
- Social Services
- Education
- Insurance
- Not-for-Profit
- Finance
- Health Care
- Transportation
- Construction & Trades
- Faith Organizations
- Service Groups

With these groups in mind, the Recovery Manager planned various engagement strategies to ensure appropriate communication channels were developed and met the needs of the various groups and to effectively coordinate between them.

Recovery management communication channels were established in late October 2017 to drive inbound enquiries to the Recovery Manager, as the CRD's central contact point.

Traditional communications focused on a) those who lost homes and, b) community-based agencies, case managed services, and community groups to continue to promote recovery referrals and disseminate program information, and important key messaging. Local media

continued coverage of the various recovery efforts helping to broadcast news and events. Engagement tools included:

- business cards
- email address
- news releases and social media
- toll free and local phone numbers
- CRD Wildfire Recovery webpage
- promotions at events & presentations

In addition, private meeting space was made available at the CRD's Williams Lake office to hold meetings, support the confidential collection of information, and offer privacy for face-to-face meetings with area residents.

Business cards were handed out at events and posted on community bulletin boards and at rural CRD library locations. Information posters were distributed around the region for rural community communications and role promotion.

Recovery Email Address

A confidential and secure CRD email address, recovery@cariboord.ca, was established by October 25, 2017 for recovery communications and will be activated for future events.



Figure 2. Number of email contacts per month

Figure 2 illustrates the number of new, unique residential and business emails per month in blue. The orange pillars depict the total number of recovery related emails per month to manage follow-ups, research, advocacy, and referrals to support individual and business recovery programming.

Toll Free & Local Phone/Message Number

A toll-free number was linked to a cell phone with a local number and supported by messaging services and call display. This allowed the Recovery Manager to work throughout the region and remain accessible evenings and weekends to support the needs of working residents.

Figure 3 shows the total number of inbound calls per month. Blue columns show unique calls from first-time residential and business callers. Orange columns measure the total number of calls over the course of each month including engagements with provincial/municipal and First Nations recovery managers, community agencies and recovery non-government organizations.

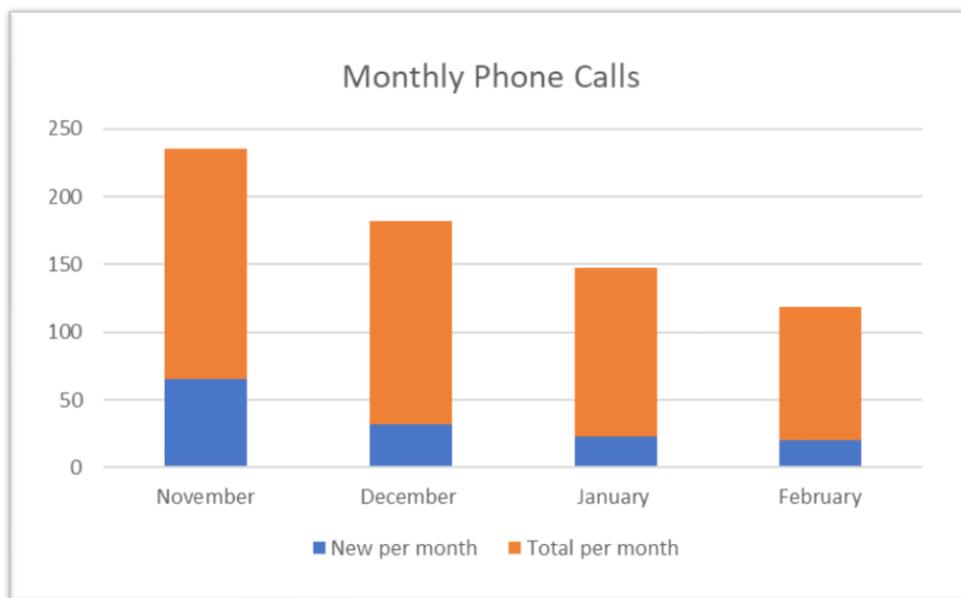


Figure 3. Number of phone calls per month

As a practice, the Recovery Manager encouraged those emailing to follow up on additional recovery opportunities by phone to maximize the potential for assistance. Capacity and needs assessments were used to understand the scope of need to provide appropriate and culturally sensitive resource referrals related to unique situations and to verify:

- contact information,
- household profile (number of people, special needs, vulnerabilities),
- impacts of evacuation or shelter in place,
- economic recovery needs, access to Emergency Social Services and Red Cross assistance,
- sustainability (income, family and social supports, long term housing), and
- immediate needs like short term housing, health care, and cultural supports.

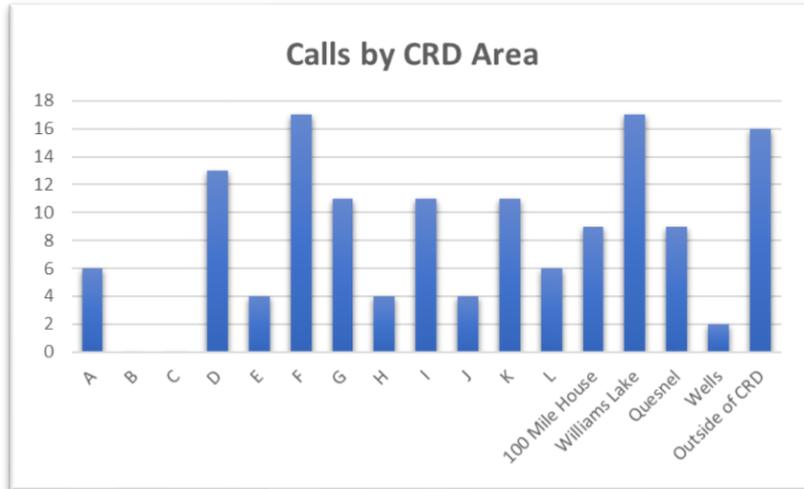


Figure 4. Distribution of calls from around the region by area and municipality

Call volume patterns in Figure 4 above tend to reflect areas most significantly impacted directly by fires and urban/rural areas where the needs for business recovery information and supports are centralized. Most calls from beyond the CRD were from businesses, media, First Nations, recovery aide organizations, businesses, provincial staff, and other districts.

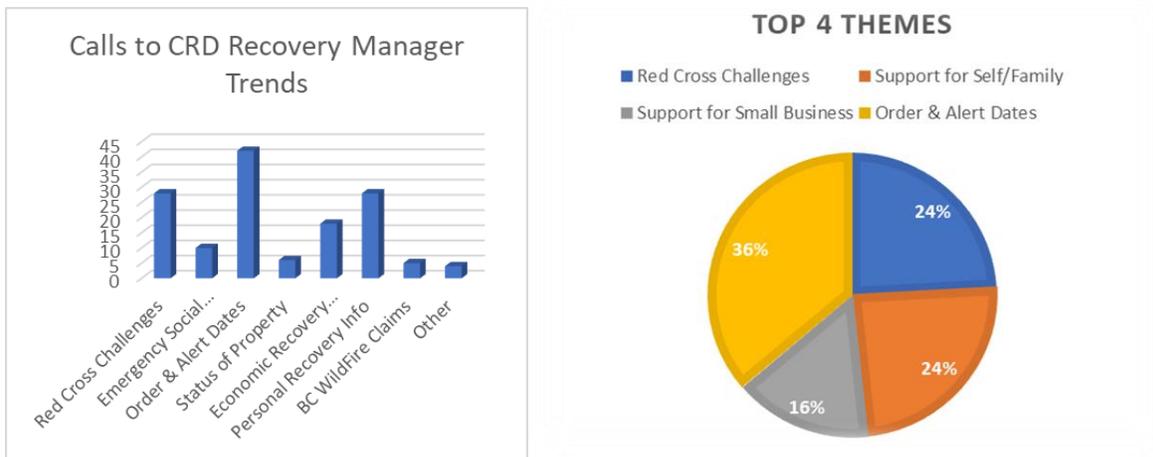


Figure 5. Phone call trends by theme

First time callers often required evacuation order/alert information to complete Red Cross, agricultural recovery, and insurance claims, see Figure 5. As needs assessments were conducted, additional unmet needs were sometimes uncovered allowing for a more comprehensive referral process and dialogue.

Wildfire Recovery Web Page

A [Wildfire Recovery](#) web page was established and linked to the CRD homepage.

This page posts general information on recovery programs and services, links to other CRD pages, and includes external resources to minimize time spent searching multiple sites.

The page was updated as new programs emerged and reported recovery needs changed.

Page views peaked in December and began to decline by February 2018, similar to email and phone trends.

Webpage analytics showed a total of 1500 views by Feb 28, 2018.

Media Engagement & Monitoring

Media engagements followed the initial CRD recovery news release with coverage on regional radio news channels and print media markets.

CRD social media messaging was disseminated as recovery program promotion and communication needs presented.

Media monitoring for key words resulted in a weekly review of headlining media coverage to remain informed on activities and emerging issues around the region.

Short & Mid-Term CRD Recovery Activities – Connecting with Communities

To share messaging and match people with available resources the Recovery Manager:

- conducted a series of community events & presentations,
- attended regular bi-weekly meetings with Provincial, Municipal and First Nations Recovery Managers,
- frequently met with non-government organizations and community service agencies, and
- facilitated Red Cross Community Partnership program applications.

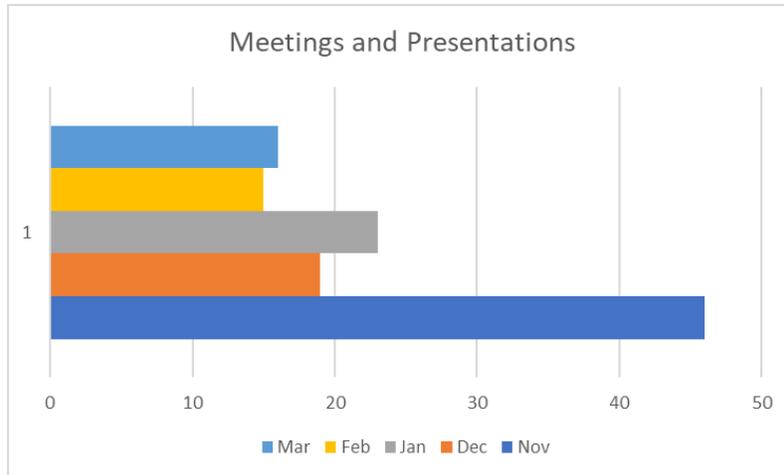


Figure 6. Meetings, events and presentations month to month

The CRD Recovery Manager participated in over 119 meetings and presentations between the beginning of November 2017 and the end of March 2018 as shown in Figure 6.

It has been vitally important to build and maintain relationships to support the flow of current information to advocate and assess gaps on an ongoing basis and to coordinate recovery transition in the long term to community services, social and rural development.

To gauge effectiveness of the steps taken to relay important recovery key messaging, all first time in bound phone calls included tracking of communication channel outcomes.

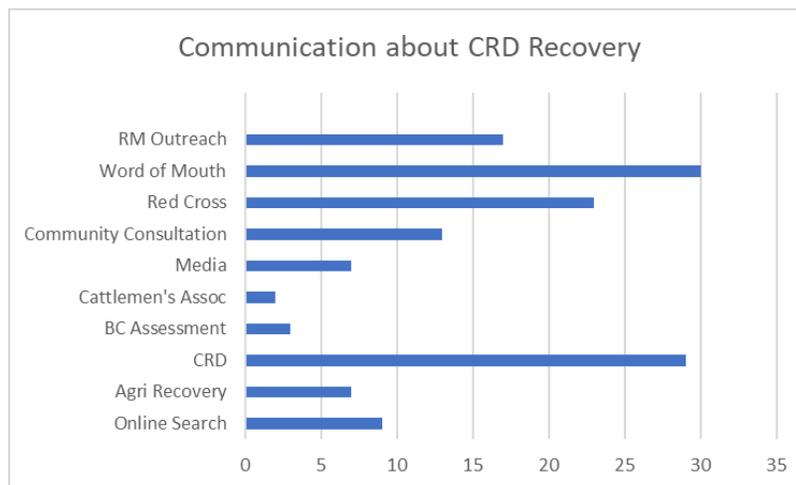


Figure 7. Outcomes of various recovery communication channels

Dominant patterns indicated in Figure 7 show that word of mouth, CRD, and Red Cross referrals top the trends, followed closely by outreach promotions resulting in calls.

General Recovery Findings & Trends

Health & Wellness

- Desire to tell individual evacuation/shelter in place story, be heard and understood
- Desire to improve environmental challenges posed by shelter in place (power outages, medical needs, food and supplies, access to timely information)
- Desire for better communication channels and more timely information during and after events (from all agencies and levels of government)
- Desire for local and accessible mental health supports for self and others (businesses, elderly, youth, ranchers, tourism operators)
- Fears about next time/future disaster event, short and long-term health impacts, environmental impacts on livelihoods, economy, homes and long-term security

Information & Action

- Desire for local knowledge, equipment and resources to be included in emergency management planning going forward and as an employment opportunity to support local economies during events
- Desire for wildfire urban interface fuel reduction planning and action information
- Desire for environmental reclamation action planning information

Financial Supports

- Supports for rural fire departments (equipment, training, communication coordination)
- Business financial support for uninsured fire losses (damage to and/or complete loss of buildings and resources like tools and equipment)
- Better insurance rates and options for rural remote residents
- Challenges with Canadian Red Cross (difficulty accessing funding, turned down and frustrated with standing in lines/making calls, unfair distribution of funding)

These themes persisted throughout the duration of recovery management across the Cariboo region.

Some of these themes indicate that personal recovery pathways include reconciling what happened in 2017 through planning and preparedness for the next event. It is understood that being prepared for the next potential disaster event builds resiliency.

Mental Health & Recovery

It can be expected that people who experience disaster will have some degree of psychological response. These responses will differ from person to person.

The effects of stress in response to a disaster may be significant for some. People who experience major disasters can go through various stages of grief and experience trigger events causing set backs and delays to individual recovery processes.

Often people seem to rally right after a disaster but then struggle 6 or more months later with discouragement and grief when life still hasn't returned to its former normalcy¹.

Over the course of the data collection period (October 27, 2017 to Feb 28, 2018), findings indicate

- Initial increase in men accessing mental health and counselling supports
- Increase in service requests made for children and youth
- Increase in reported domestic violence
- Increase in staff burn out and medical leave requests across helping professions
- Several weeks wait for access to mental health and wellness supports (counsellors, doctors, addiction services), in remote areas some services may not be available
- Some counselling services are at capacity and will require additional staffing to meet current increases in service level demands

To address psychosocial needs and anticipated challenges, mental health and wellness working groups were established in the region, beginning in September 2017, with support from the BC Ministry of Health, Health Emergency Management branch and the United Way Thompson Nicola Cariboo.

Wellness Managers have been hired to coordinate necessary cross regional and agency research and to roll out the working group's mental health support strategies to support recovery and resiliency building in the Cariboo.

While some people require minimal supports to build resiliency and manage stressors associated with disasters, it remains important to provide adequate resources to support all levels of need and to encourage self- recovery.

¹ www.danyainstitute.org

Residential Structural Losses

Significant personal losses can have long-term effects on wellbeing.

Through phone calls and participation in the CRD community consultations, the Recovery Manager located many people impacted by residential (primary/secondary and rental) loss directly caused by the wildfires of 2017.

Most were assisted by receiving new information on the various and newly emerging recovery support programs and services available.

Many report excellent working relations with insurance companies. Others do not, are frustrated, and feeling delayed from moving forward.

Some indicated that they still feel overwhelmed by the wildfire events. Each of these conversations included acknowledgement of impacts and mental health and/or faith-based resource referrals to support the long-term recovery processes people are entering into.

Many who were contacted did not desire assistance or referrals and had been navigating systems on their own, with other recovery personnel and advocates or with the help of family and friends.

Recovery Programs & Services

Impacts associated with the 2017 wildfire season included but were not limited to:

- loss of homes, outbuildings, private infrastructure, pets and livestock, personal effects, property and investments
- ecosystem and geographic changes due to fire, fire fighting and contamination,
- personal and business income losses, labour market challenges, disruption of services, insurance issues
- increased levels of stress and a decrease in life quality

Not all losses are currently funded for replacement, leaving recovery gaps in the short term.

The following programs, services and solutions for people, businesses, environmental reclamation and rebuilding physical structures and necessary infrastructure are available to support the recovery of these early-identified impacts.

Psychosocial/People Programing & Supports

- Canadian Red Cross Support to Self Recovery offers immediate mental health supports and referrals to private counselling as needed. The Community Partnership Program funds recovery projects suited to community needs.
- Samaritan's Purse has established case management services long term in Williams Lake to assist recovery and provide spiritual supports across the region

Other accessible social assistance programs include

- Workplace family assistance programs and benefits can be an option for counselling services
- BC211 online resources and data base for local service location
- Psychosocial First Aid, Trauma Informed Training, and ASSIST Suicide Prevention training is available for front line workers and first responders through workplace coordination and some churches
- Mental Health hot lines, accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide immediate support and referrals to locally based services
- Canadian Mental Health counselling services and homeless outreach
- Friendship Centres offer housing and counselling services
- Food banks offer food security and fresh food redistribution services
- Women's Centres provide legal advocacy, counselling, clothing and food
- Family Physicians can refer to mental health services, specialists and provide needed prescriptions
- School District 27 offered Trauma Informed Training to principals in October
- Interior Health addictions counselling, Bounce Back and Living Life to the Full programs
- Faith based groups and churches offer ongoing spiritual and community support

Community based services have resumed in full. Immigrant settlement services, seniors' centres, age friendly and social planning community groups organize regular events and have hosted recovery information sessions and meetings to keep clients and members aware and up to date on relevant resources and support services.

It is notable that, with the exception of the Canadian Red Cross programming and the Samaritan's Purse case management, all services and programs listed above existed prior to the emergency and are not specifically targeted to, or funded for, recovery.

Economic and Business Programs & Supports

- Agricultural Recovery programs assist farm status agricultural producers with targeted recovery programming for replacement of feed, fencing, stock and crops and offer workshops targeting emergency preparedness and safety
- Canadian Red Cross Support to Small Businesses, Not-for-Profit Organizations and First Nations Cultural Livelihoods provides support for uninsured financial losses for eligible applicants
- Community Futures Wildfire Recovery Support program offers navigation through a full range of business recovery programs available to date and developing programs going forward to address emerging needs like training and staff development. This program is available inter-regionally, provides rural outreach, confidentiality and one to one assistance
- Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association has been surveying tourism operator needs and developing new marketing for reputation recovery to support the region

Ongoing studies and assessments are being conducted to better understand the fire related costs to the region. Going forward more recovery programs will emerge to address findings and gaps as it is vitally important to restore business functions in the short term to ensure that communities stabilize economically to support longer term psychological recovery and resiliency building.

Environmental

- Cariboo Fire Centre Claims may be an option for damages to private lands as a result of fire mitigation and fighting efforts of BC Wildfire Service, claims can be submitted for damages incurred.
- #OperationReLeaf BC Fires is a CN and Tree Canada initiative for homeowners, private landowners, municipalities and indigenous communities to replace trees lost in the 2017 wildfires.

Geohazard and other land-based assessments are being conducted by the Ministry of Forests Lands Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development and will assist the Province in making decisions about remediation, land use, riparian areas, private lands interface, reseeding and tree planting to resolve environmental impacts.

Infrastructure (Private)

- Canadian Red Cross can assist with lost infrastructure as it pertains to business losses through the Support to Small Business and may be able to assist with costs for private hydro poles (to a one-time, maximum allowable dollar amount per client) on residential properties.

Private insurance policies in some cases covered losses of primary residential structures, out buildings and contents. Some allowed flexibility in location of rebuilding sites. Some also covered private hydro lines, perimeter and cross fencing. Some did not.

It is hopeful that forward facing Canadian Red Cross programs like the Community Partnership Program Disaster Risk Reduction stream and the Residential Repair & Rebuild program will address current environmental, private lands and residential needs.

Short Term Recovery Program Gaps & Unmet Needs

The recovery phase can move quickly, presenting an ever-changing landscape of programs, services, concepts under development, new information and individual recovery challenges. Individual and family needs may change over time and depend on the responsiveness and adaptability of programs to continue to meet emerging needs.

There are a significant number of recovery related non-government organizations, community working groups, provincial staff, municipal and regional contractors working simultaneously on recovery. These combined efforts have moved early-identified gaps toward solutions but have also brought significant challenges to light.

Foremost, there is no central recovery data collection point across the regions, municipalities or province to review findings broadly and determine the full scope of gaps in programs and services to date.

Current Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection legislation is a barrier to sharing information, and thus a barrier to developing more timely recovery programming, identifying broad trends or significant outliers.

Additional gaps include:

- Regional labour market information and a broad-based health impact assessment are currently absent. Data would be helpful in decision-making and recovery program development.
- Recovery specific programs and services for medium to large businesses employing the largest number of people. Recovery assistance would help to avoid staffing adjustments due to reduced production periods.
- Adequate clinical counselling services and support staff. Funded and accessible programs for economic recovery are more numerous than those for psychosocial recovery, to date.
- Solutions to address precarious housing for those displaced by rentals burnt in fires. There are inadequate long-term housing options to meet the current needs.
- Various motorized, un-motorized and low mobility trail systems have been damaged by fire and may require financial assistance to rebuild or establish new trails. Trails offer cultural, recreational, sport, health and wellness public benefits and are used across the region by multiple users. No funding has been formally secured to date.
- Community and fire halls used to aid shelter in place need repairs and upgrades. Funding streams are needed to maintain community assets.
- Consistent communication channels & cross regional broadband deficiencies remain a challenge for future emergency planning and communications.
- Ongoing advocacy for economic sectors and individual businesses impacted by the fires of 2017. There is some indication that the current recovery funding is not meeting survival needs.
- Long-term advocacy for individuals and vulnerabilities. There is no current significant solution for full replacement of lost structures, equipment, tools, investments, or for non-farming pack/companion animal supports.
- Program deadline extensions. Some program deadlines are too short and may generate recovery gaps: short deadlines on primary recovery programs risk leaving people vulnerable and unable to access needed supports.

Extending deadlines through to the mid-term recovery phase or beyond would promote accessibility and maximum benefit and better fit the populations targeted for assistance.

It is important to note that many people report that they are doing well. Some have returned to normal life and business and feel that the recovery information, programs and services that they accessed were adequate and have met their needs.

Others have simply not accessed assistance yet or feel that they do not need assistance. This does not indicate a program gap, but rather that all recovery programs are not necessarily suitable for all people and that other options may be needed over time.

Long Term Recovery & Transition

Mid and long-term recovery needs are still being uncovered and recognized. Long-term recovery is gradual and will take place over time as communities re-establish and develop systems for planning and improvements to rebuild better.

Recovery best practices highlight the need for community led recovery with a lens on long-term recovery planning. Recovery action with consideration for diverse groups, collaboration and coordination with tailored resources will achieve better outcomes.

Community Recovery: Working Groups & Service Clubs

To assist recovery planning and to problem solve gaps identified through the region, the CRD Recovery Manager has worked to establish a Cariboo Unmet Needs Working Group.

This working group aims to address unmet needs, provide community-based solutions, share out knowledge of resources or potential solutions, and network back to agencies to solve problems.

While this group cannot provide case management, address significant pre-existing community issues, or provide direct financial supports, the intent is to work in partnership with other committees and groups to collaborate on advocacy and options for the long term.

- Locally driven Mental Health and Wellness Working groups will continue to meet and support the Wellness Managers with expertise and resources.
- Several service clubs have donated significant funding to some independent fire departments, first responders, and search and rescue for equipment and training. Additional financial assistance has been levered for wildfire prevention, radio repeater upgrades, and long term sustainable recovery activities.
- Other agencies- social planning, social-services, and faith groups - regularly meet to discuss impacts, possible contributions, and challenges to lend a hand toward providing the direction and motivation for ongoing projects and programming.
- Individual and workplace donations continue to help bolster funding sources and community needs.

Some recovery needs can be anticipated and addressed early on, others will need to be responsive to emerging needs to adequately assist in community rebuilding.

Planning Forward

Clearly communicating plans to mitigate risks and wildland/urban interface hazard reductions, including timely and direct stakeholder engagement is needed to facilitate regaining trust in the local authorities and achieve recovery.

It is understood that threats remain, and timely mitigation efforts can improve the recovery experience of the communities impacted by last year's wildfire.

Recovery planning cycles back to emergency preparedness planning, informing planning for the next response.

Emergency management and crisis communications improvements are underway within the Cariboo Regional District. The district's Emergency Preparedness Committee is looking at ways to incorporate recommendations from the Cariboo Chilcotin Wildfires Report 2017 including community engagement with FireSmart programing, fuel reduction, wildfire protection planning, preparedness planning activities, and communication improvements.

Opportunities & Learning

The recovery stage is also a time to maximize opportunities. Change is underway, and this change brings the chance to adjust and explore new approaches and opportunities.

Current provincial economic impact analysis, geohazard assessments, and an independent report on flood and wildfire emergency response will shape the direction of emerging recovery programs for the area's economy and residents.

Recovery engaged community planning will address future events and assist to mitigate some of the challenges experienced in 2017.

Many existing local and interregional companies will address the market needs associated with the fire impacts from fencing replacement and repair, logging of salvageable timber, equipment operation and repair, road resurfacing and building, marketing, construction, environmental remediation and tree planting. This will stimulate labour markets and the economy, replacing some of the revenues and work lost in 2017.

Economic and community development activities remain the focus of regular business planning, strategies and efforts of CRD staff. Current programs are being reviewed to assist filling gaps and to aid community transitioning.

The CRD can continue to support the long-term recovery of the region by

- *Implementing the recovery work plan* – consider the actions identified in the incident specific recovery work plan submitted by the CRD Recovery Manager, adjusting activities as required based on emerging trends and resources.
- *Emergency preparedness planning* - regular CRD Emergency Preparedness Committee meetings could include recovery as a standing agenda item to ensure recovery remains top of mind and informs emergency preparedness planning going forward.
- *Hazard, risk, and vulnerability assessment (HRVA) reviews* - the next phase of emergency preparedness activities can include post fire HVRA to inform how fire related vulnerabilities and recovery needs may require base emergency preparedness plan adaptations or resource allocations.
- *Continuing to support sustainable social and rural development* – recovery gap assessments have brought forward the need to repair and build recreational trails to encourage wellness opportunities, and to secure funding for upgrades and repairs to community and fire halls which were used for shelter in place hubs and volunteer coordination. Funding levered through recovery channels may support these works.
- *Establishing a Cariboo Regional District business registry* - economic stability is a cornerstone of recovery. Outreach to businesses impacted by the 2017 fire season is complicated by the lack of business registry information in the outlying rural areas. Collecting and organizing this data would assist in future emergency and communications planning, recovery operations, and close potential gaps earlier.
- *Communication coordination* - consider stream lined and simplified early recovery communication to ensure accessibility. Consistent symbols could be used to indicate reception/resiliency centre locations.

It is important to note that this learning is captured in the short term. Learning and adapting to the changing recovery needs and adjusting planning approaches are a necessary aspect of long-term recovery, offering invaluable experience on which to build more resilient and more prepared communities promoting sustainable and vital working and living conditions.

The residents of the Cariboo Regional District are as diverse as its landscape. This diversity is a foundation of its character and is not a challenge but an opportunity. Recognition of community strengths and local knowledge are vitally important and lend to the development of long-term recovery programs that match this unique and diverse character and the learning opportunities ahead.