



Provincial Support for the Village of Lytton's Wildfire Recovery

Examination at a glance

Why we did this examination

- On June 30, 2021, a wildfire destroyed 90 per cent of the Village of Lytton and 45 homes and several buildings in three Lytton First Nation reserves. Two people lost their lives, and several thousand people lost their service centre, including the grocery store, bank, post office, school, and health centre.
- The devastation was overwhelming. The land was covered in debris and ash containing asbestos, heavy metals, and other contaminants.
- The fire destroyed the village's electrical infrastructure and it worsened pre-existing water and sewer systems issues. Nearly all municipal records, including building and planning bylaws, were destroyed.
- The subsequent recovery was complex and required support from all levels of government. The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness was responsible for leading provincial support for the village's recovery.
- We carried out this examination in response to concerns raised by the public and Members of the Legislative Assembly about the progress and cost of recovery in the village.

Our examination

Our examination focused on the Province of B.C.'s role in the Village of Lytton's ongoing recovery from the 2021 wildfire. Our report:

- identifies challenges experienced by the province while supporting and funding the village's recovery;
- summarizes provisions of the new *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* that apply to disaster recovery in small municipalities; and
- provides areas for the province to consider as it develops policies and guidance for implementing its new emergency management framework.

Examination period:

June 30, 2021 to March 31, 2025.

Challenges experienced by the province

Supporting the Village of Lytton's complex and unprecedented recovery needs

- At the time of the fire, the province did not have a comprehensive legal framework to guide disaster recovery, and its funding mechanisms did not anticipate the scale of the village's needs.
- The province expected the village to lead its own recovery, but the village lacked staff and funds to do this. Most of the residents didn't have fire insurance or were underinsured.
- The province ultimately funded the village's core government operations and the complex remediation work that was needed before rebuilding.
- By the end of our examination period (March 2025), 33 residential and other building permits had been issued by the Village of Lytton.

Examination at a glance *(continued)*

Ensuring Nlaka'pamux were partners in the Village of Lytton's recovery

- The Nlaka'pamux have Aboriginal title and rights in their territory, which includes the Village of Lytton.
- At the time of the fire, the *Emergency Program Act* was silent on the role of Indigenous Peoples in emergency management.
- The province was unable to facilitate a collaborative recovery partnership between the Nlaka'pamux governing bodies and the municipality.
- This lack of collaboration was a missed opportunity for the village and the province.
- The archaeological work was a significant source of tension in the community. The province could not mitigate the tension despite providing funds to the village to offset the costs.

Providing oversight of the Village of Lytton's recovery activities funded by the province

- The province set up a series of funding agreements with the village that committed over \$60 million to recovery activities.
- Initially, the province provided the funding in lump sums. The village was expected to report back on its recovery activities funded by the province.
- Between 2022 and 2023, the village did not provide the province with all required progress and spending reports.
- In 2023, a firm, hired by the province to review the village's use of provincial funds, found the village lacked capacity to manage the complex contracts needed for the recovery work.
- In 2024, the province implemented a new funding agreement requiring the village to submit receipts for reimbursement, and meet expectations for conducting recovery work, such as engaging with Nlaka'pamux governing bodies.
- As of March 2025, the village had provided all required reporting under the new funding agreement.

Subsequent related changes to provincial emergency legislation

In November 2023, the province passed the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*. The act includes provisions applicable to disaster recovery in small municipalities like the Village of Lytton, such as:

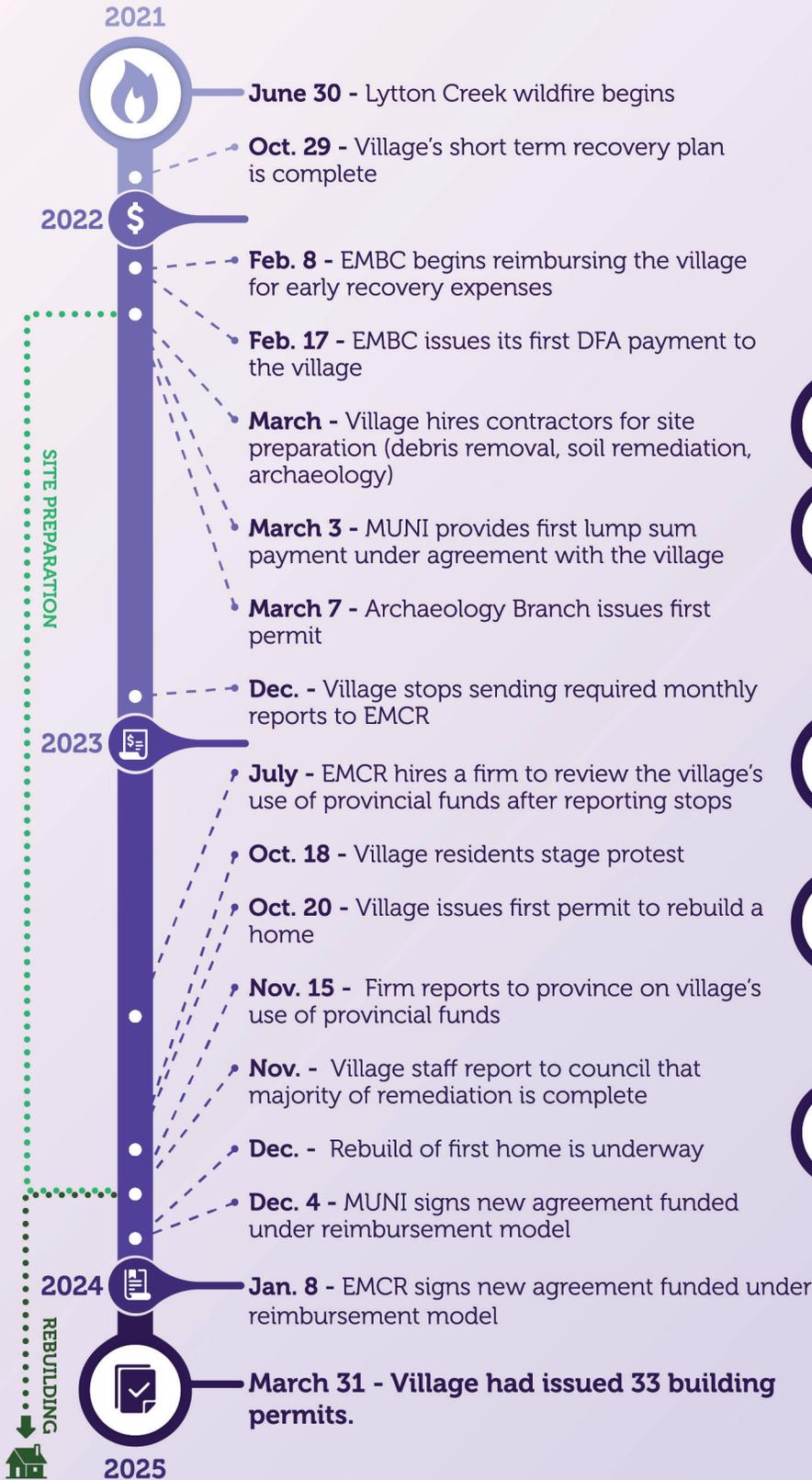
- recovery powers for both local authorities and the province; and
- requirements for local authorities to work with Indigenous governing bodies on emergency plans.

Considerations for the development of emergency management policies and guidance

Our report identifies areas that the province may wish to consider as it develops policies and guidance to support its implementation of the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*. Areas for consideration include:

- anticipating disaster recovery in communities with low cash reserves;
- developing agreements under the act with Indigenous governing bodies; and
- developing a framework for assessing a local government's capacity to lead its own disaster recovery.

Village of Lytton recovery timeline



LEGEND

- EMBC = Emergency Management BC
- EMCR = Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness
- MUNI = Ministry of Municipal Affairs
- DFA = Disaster Financial Assistance

Funds disbursed to Village of Lytton, \$000s

		DISBURSMENTS	DISB. TOTAL
2021	12/21	OTHER \$1,000	\$1,000
2022	2022	EMBC \$1,958	\$11,318
	03/22	MUNI \$8,360	
	04/22	EMBC \$18,359	
	12/22	EMCR \$5,000	
2023	02/23	EMCR \$3,405	\$44,632
	03/23	MUNI \$6,550	
2024	06/24	EMCR \$5,911	\$51,088
	08-09/24	EMCR \$545	
	10-11/24	EMCR \$286	
2025	01/25	EMCR \$175	\$51,374

As of March 31, 2025 - Total amount disbursed to Village of Lytton \$51,549

As of March 31, the funds committed but not spent by the province under reimbursement agreements included (\$000s):

- EMCR - \$10,579
- MUNI - \$2,505