

## NEWS RELEASE

### For immediate release

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#### **Report examines provincial role in Village of Lytton's recovery from 2021 wildfire**

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General has concluded its independent examination of the provincial government's role in the Village of Lytton's recovery from the wildfire that swept through the area on June 30, 2021. The auditor general's report was delivered to the Legislative Assembly today.

The wildfire claimed two lives and destroyed 90 per cent of the village's homes, shops, and services. It ruined key infrastructure and left widespread areas of contaminated debris. It also destroyed 45 homes and several other buildings in Lytton First Nation communities, adjacent to the village.

The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness led the province's support for the Village of Lytton. The auditor general's examination began after concerns were raised by members of the public and MLAs about the time and cost of the recovery.

"The Province of B.C. faced three main challenges after the wildfire," Auditor General Bridget Parrish said. "First, the province's legislation and policy were not sufficient to support the complex and unprecedented needs of the village. Second, while the village sits on the traditional territory of the Nlaka'pamux, the province was unable to facilitate collaboration between the village and key Indigenous governing bodies. And third, at certain points the province lacked necessary oversight of how the village was spending provincial funds for the recovery."

#### **Complex and unprecedented needs**

At the time of the fire, B.C.'s emergency management legislation and policy was not sufficient to guide the unprecedented recovery of an entire B.C. community. The Village of Lytton lacked staffing and financial resources to lead its own recovery. As well, most residents were uninsured or underinsured. The recovery was highly complex and included restoring the local government, carrying out extensive soil remediation, along with archaeological considerations.

#### **Partnerships with Indigenous governing bodies**

The Nlaka'pamux have Aboriginal title and rights in Nlaka'pamux Territory, which includes the site where the Village of Lytton was established. The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* affirmed the rights of Indigenous governing bodies to participate in decision-making in their traditional territories.

There were early attempts by the province and key Indigenous governing bodies to take a collaborative approach with the village, but the auditor general's examination reports that joint recovery activities with the village failed to emerge.

#### **Oversight of wildfire recovery funding**

In a series of funding agreements with the Village of Lytton, the province committed more than \$60 million for wildfire recovery.

The funding first came in lump sums with expectations that the village would provide the province with financial reports on its recovery expenditures. However, the Ministry of Emergency

Management and Climate Readiness received incomplete reporting from the village in 2022 and 2023.

The lack of reporting meant the province could not say with certainty how provincial funds were spent during that period. In 2024, the province implemented a new funding agreement that required the village to submit receipts to receive reimbursement.

### **Emergency and Disaster Management Act (2023)**

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* became law two years after the fire. It includes provisions applicable to disaster recovery in small municipalities like the Village of Lytton.

For example, it provides pathways for local governments to form collaborative emergency management organizations with Indigenous governing bodies and the province, rather than attempt to lead recovery alone. The act also recognizes Indigenous governing bodies' role in emergency management and it includes options for agreements with the province.

### **Considerations**

The auditor general's report specifies areas that the province may wish to consider in new policies and guidance for emergency and disaster management, including:

- anticipating disaster recovery in communities that have low cash reserves;
- enhancing oversight of provincially funded recovery work;
- ensuring local communities are supported in implementing the act's requirements; and
- developing a framework for assessing a local authority's capacity to lead disaster recovery.

### **More about the wildfire**

- Along with the loss of life and property, the Village of Lytton and nearby Nlaka'pamux communities lost access to groceries, banking, postal services, and its school and health centre.
- Debris and ash contained asbestos, heavy metals like lead, and other contaminants.
- Electrical infrastructure was destroyed and the fire worsened pre-existing water and sewer system issues.
- Nearly all municipal records, including building and planning bylaws, were lost.
- The recovery involved all levels of government, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector.

### **About the examination**

- The Office of the Auditor General examined the province's support for the Village of Lytton's wildfire recovery during the period from June 30, 2021, to the end of the last fiscal year, March 31, 2025.

### **Links**

Report: <https://www.oag.bc.ca/provincial-support-for-the-village-of-lyttons-recovery/>

Examination at a glance: <https://www.oag.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/963/2026/03/OAGBC-202603-LR-AAG.pdf>

Video (Auditor General Bridget Parrish): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOU\\_nbjGoVc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOU_nbjGoVc)

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