



Building Resiliency Together

Advancing the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Emergency Management Strategy: **Areas for Action**



Federal-Provincial-Territorial
Emergency Management Partners





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The Emergency Management Strategy for Canada guides Federal, Provincial, and Territorial government collaboration on emergency management through an all-hazards, whole-of-society approach.

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Emergency Management Strategy for Canada

A Path to Resilience

The Emergency Management Strategy for Canada guides Federal, Provincial, and Territorial government collaboration on emergency management through an all-hazards, whole-of-society approach. The Strategy outlines key areas where Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments, with respect to their own roles and responsibilities in regards to emergency management, can collaborate to increase disaster resilience by 2030.

In 2015, the federal government committed to the United Nations' *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, emphasizing international cooperation and resilience building through a whole-of-society approach. The Emergency Management Strategy helps fulfill the Government of Canada's commitment under the *Sendai Framework* for a pan-Canadian Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and aligns with the *Sendai Framework's* 2030 timeline.

To support the Emergency Management Strategy, Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments are advancing pan-Canadian efforts, according to their respective priorities, through jointly developed action plans. The initial "2021-2022 Federal-Provincial-Territorial Interim Action Plan", was unveiled in March 2022. This current plan continues to advance this work and outlines key areas of collaboration to ensure progress is made on the five priority areas of activity delineated in the Emergency Management Strategy.

How do we define resilience?

As written in *An Emergency Management Framework for Canada – Third Edition (2017)*, Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments define resilience as the capacity of a system, community or society to adapt to disturbances resulting from hazards by persevering, recuperating or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning. Resilient capacity is built through a process of empowering citizens, responders, organizations, communities, governments, systems and society to share the responsibility to keep hazards from becoming disasters. Resilience minimizes vulnerability; dependence and susceptibility by creating or strengthening social and physical capacity in the human and built- environment to cope with, adapt to, respond to, and recover and learn from disasters.

These five priority areas of activity are:

1. Enhance whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience;
2. Improve understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society;
3. Increase focus on whole-of-society disaster prevention and mitigation activities;
4. Enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster the development of new capabilities; and,
5. Strengthen recovery efforts by building back better to minimize the impacts of future disasters.

Provincial and territorial governments have responsibility for emergency management within their respective jurisdictions. They identify their priorities in all dimensions of emergency management (prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery) and seek continuous improvement, based on their knowledge of the territory, the population, and stakeholders. In an emergency situation, they are called upon to respond quickly, often in close collaboration with their local governments and emergency management agencies. When these emergencies reach levels that exceed provincial or territorial response capabilities, the federal government rapidly responds to any request for assistance from a provincial or territorial government requiring additional resources to intervene and ensure the safety of the population.

This document must therefore be understood within the jurisdiction of each government, and nothing herein should be interpreted in a way that undermines these authorities.

Development of the Strategic Actions

Continuing to deliver on the Emergency Management Strategy, Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management have produced this current document at the request of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Emergency Management.

In order to gather each government's point of view, the Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management oversaw the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Emergency Management Strategy Action Plan Working Group which is made up of delegates from across Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments. It should be noted that the priorities established through this current agenda do not create obligations or binding agreements for provincial and territorial governments, which identify their own objectives and continue to prioritize emergency management activities within their respective jurisdictions.

In order to meet the ambitious objectives set out in the Emergency Management Strategy, whole-of-society participation and collaboration is required, including from Indigenous organizations and communities. Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments, within their areas of responsibilities, seek to establish an ongoing dialogue with Indigenous Peoples with the goal of integrating traditional knowledge, awareness and education programs into broader emergency management and disaster risk reduction.

This plan will support Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments in advancing the defined outcomes in the Emergency Management Strategy and demonstrate the concrete steps that they intend to take, with their respective emergency management partners, to advance resilience to disasters.

The Importance of Prioritizing Disaster Risk Reduction Activities

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments acknowledge that investing in disaster prevention and mitigation is essential to reducing future disaster losses. Disaster risk is a direct threat to the economic security of the entire population. The evidence is clear that prioritizing emergency prevention, preparedness, and mitigation is an investment that pays off by lessening the human costs of disaster and the financial burden of emergency response and recovery. Studies from Natural Resources Canada and the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council in the United States show that for every \$1 invested in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, between \$4 and \$10 can be expected to be saved, while also improving resilience by further protecting the economic and human facets of our society.

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments, through the Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management table, will review this document on a regular basis to ensure that it remains relevant to all levels of government.

Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Emergency Management have identified five Strategic Actions:

1. Continued Federal-Provincial-Territorial government engagement to enhance pan-Canadian emergency management
2. Improve pan-Canadian understanding of disaster risk
3. Reduce pan-Canadian disaster risk
4. Pursue enhanced pan-Canadian emergency communications capabilities
5. Advance proactive disaster recovery programming

1 Emergency Management Strategy Priority Area of Activity Enhance whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience

Strategic Action 1: Continued Federal-Provincial-Territorial government engagement to enhance pan-Canadian emergency management

Continued collaboration amongst Federal-Provincial-Territorial partners is a critical overarching step to strengthen resilience in Canada to minimize duplication of efforts and fill gaps. Improved intergovernmental communication and cohesion will create stronger mitigation/prevention, preparation, response, and recovery from disasters across the country.

Emergency Management with Indigenous Partners

Indigenous communities are among those most impacted by emergencies due to their remote and coastal locations, and insufficient access to emergency services. There is an abundance of evidence that emergencies disproportionately affect Indigenous communities. For example, First Nations are 18 times more likely to be evacuated during a disaster than non-Indigenous communities. While Indigenous communities are at elevated risk, they have demonstrated the importance of preserving and incorporating traditional knowledge, which is invaluable in reducing and responding to disaster risk. Acknowledging these factors, the Emergency Management Strategy for Canada identifies “[establishing] dialogue with Indigenous Peoples regarding the emergency management needs of their communities” as a Federal-Provincial-Territorial priority outcome for 2030.

Emergency Management Activities

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments will continue to hold productive meetings throughout the emergency management governance system, beginning with continued meetings at the Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management table to advance emergency management across Canada and monitor progress on key Federal-Provincial-Territorial initiatives. This table of senior officials, which meets on a monthly basis, provides a platform for governments to discuss key emergency management topics. The Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management table allows Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments to align strategic priorities and best practices, and discuss lessons learned in emergency management. Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management report upwards to the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Deputy Ministers and Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for Emergency Management.

Collaboration During an Unprecedented Wildfire Season in 2023

The 2023 wildfire season was particularly challenging. The intensity and length of wildfires caused large-scale evacuations, major health concerns, and destruction to critical infrastructure, personal property, and land. During this 2023 season, well over 6,000 fires burned more than 18 million hectares, far surpassing the annual historic record of 7.6 million hectares, set in 1989. Wildfires were present in most jurisdictions, with the most intense fires affecting the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Quebec, and Nova Scotia.

Municipalities and provincial and territorial governments are on the frontlines and demonstrated effective response to these extreme wildfires, protecting the wildland-urban interface. However, the magnitude of some fires prompted provinces and territories to submit Requests for Federal Assistance. The federal government oftentimes sent in the Canadian Armed Forces, which helped provincial and local authorities across Canada in controlling wildfires and limiting their impacts.

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments obtained additional firefighting support from a dozen countries, which provided thousands of firefighting personnel and specialized equipment. Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments

collaborated on the appropriate distribution of firefighters and resources to protect Canadian communities.

These collaborative efforts have demonstrated that Canada is stronger when Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments work together and support one another. Acknowledging the increasing frequency, duration, and intensity of wildfires, it is expected that extensive collaboration between Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments to aid large-scale firefighting operations will remain necessary in future years.

2 Emergency Management Strategy Priority Area of Activity Improve understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society

Strategic Action 2: Improve pan-Canadian understanding of disaster risk

Gaining a better understanding of disaster risk within Canada helps inform prioritization of emergency management efforts, both in terms of proactive reduction of that risk (prevention/mitigation) and in readying jurisdictions to prepare, respond and recover from potential disasters. At a local level, increased community expertise and public awareness will help keep everyone safe and reduce potential costs of a disaster. This action will focus on activities carried out by each government to support improved disaster risk and capability knowledge, information sharing, and decision-making.

Emergency Management Activities

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments are committed to ensuring that Canadians continue to receive the best available risk information. Each government will continue their respective efforts in emergency management education and public awareness, to provide the best possible information on potential risks to its citizens.

Additionally, Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments will ensure that tools are developed by their respective governments to adequately inform the population about flood risks.

3 Emergency Management Strategy Priority Area of Activity Increase focus on whole-of-society disaster prevention and mitigation activities

Strategic Action 3: Reduce pan-Canadian disaster risk

Floods are the most common and costly disaster events in Canada. Residential flooding alone can result in nearly \$2.9 billion per year (annual average loss) in damage, while the majority of homeowners remain uninsured. It is projected that these costs will increase over the coming years as climate change causes pluvial, fluvial, and coastal flooding to be more frequent and intense.

Emergency Management Activities

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments will look to take a multi-pronged approach to reduce flood risk, along with disaster risk of other hazards. A proactive approach is well-supported by benefit-cost analyses which show that preventative and mitigative measures reduce social, cultural and environmental impacts caused by disasters. A Federal-Provincial-Territorial committee will be set up to advance collective work on flood insurance. These collaborative Federal-Provincial-Territorial activities will support many of the desired Emergency Management

Federal-Provincial-Territorial Efforts to Reduce Wildfire Risk

The federal government and Canada's fire management agencies work collaboratively, sharing information and facilitating the delivery of essential services (such as fire modeling, mapping and monitoring, and fire behaviour, risk and growth assessments) which helps to build an understanding of how climate change is affecting forests, wildfire and wildfire management now and in the future. These tools help fire managers make decisions on best fire response and allocation of firefighting resources.

In addition, through cooperative efforts like the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers and the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments work together closely to develop collective wildland fire management approaches and strategies that address the growing challenge of increasing forest fires across the country.

Strategy outcomes, including advancing disaster risk knowledge, increasing preparedness, prevention and mitigation, and building back better in disaster recovery.

The federal government will engage with provinces, territories, and the insurance industry to assess the impact and feasibility of a pan-Canadian flood insurance arrangement to address gaps in disaster protection and help Canadians access affordable insurance. In the future, this engagement could lead to the design and implementation of the arrangements, as well as the requirements for its long-term fiscal sustainability, including cost-sharing, affordability subsidies and risk mitigation.

As an additional prevention measure, the federal Government Operations Centre, led by Public Safety Canada, will continue to disseminate annual risk assessments and forecasts for flood and wildfire seasons to provincial and territorial governments. These assessments will complement those produced by provincial and territorial governments. A common knowledge base shared among Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments of Canada's risk for future flood and wildfire seasons will be a key support towards ensuring that governments are prepared to deal with them, including ensuring that emergency management resources are ready to be deployed to the most at-risk areas.

4 Emergency Management Strategy Priority Area of Activity Enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster the development of new capabilities

Strategic Action 4: Pursue enhanced pan-Canadian emergency communications capabilities

Improving Canada's response capabilities means reducing additional costs, minimizing delays and human impacts for those affected, enhancing community resiliency, and strengthening risk reduction and resiliency for future events. Recent emergency management events have highlighted the continued need for advancing pan-Canadian communications and logistical coordination.

Emergency Management Activities

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments will discuss collaborative work to strengthen the overall use, sustainability, continuity of service and governance of the National Public Alerting System in the changing technological environment. The National Public Alerting System is a public-private partnership that provides emergency management organizations across the country with a standard alerting capability to warn the public of imminent or unfolding hazards. It is essential to ensure that this capability remains sustainable and that efforts are made to enhance the system and ensure the safety of the entire population.

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments will work to guide the deployment of a Public Safety Broadband Network in Canada. Standing up a Public Safety Broadband Network is a priority for governments as it would provide public safety personnel across the country with a dedicated, resilient network that would support enhanced coordination and response.

By conducting this collaborative work, Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments can expect to improve the evidence base for decision-making on emergency communications (e.g., risks and constraints, impacts of future technologies, governance models); and collectively develop next steps to advance the required pan-Canadian governance framework. Additionally, the coverage and resilience priorities identified by working with key partners will help guide investments and deployment plans for a pan-Canadian Public Safety Broadband Network.

The 2019 Global Commission on Adaptation's flagship report 'Adapt Now' found that early warning systems can provide more than a tenfold return on investment, the greatest of any adaptation measure included in the report.

5 Emergency Management Strategy Priority Area of Activity **Strengthen recovery efforts by building back better to minimize the impacts of future disasters**

Strategic Action 5: Advance proactive disaster recovery programming

Since 1970, the federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements program has provided critical support in the wake of major disasters in Canada; however, as disaster risk and losses continue to mount across the country, a new approach is needed. Disasters caused or exacerbated by climate change are growing in cost and frequency: the Canadian Climate Institute projects that in 2025, Canada will experience \$25 billion in losses relative to a stable-climate scenario, which is equal to 50% of projected 2025 gross domestic product growth. In addition, the federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements review noted that there are substantial differences in disaster outcomes across different geographic regions and different populations. To minimize the impact of disasters on Canadians, to support a more resilient recovery, and to better promote risk reduction and mitigation across all phases of emergency management, our common approach to disaster assistance arrangements needs to be revised and renewed.

Emergency Management Activities

Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments will continue to leverage the findings from the federal review of the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements from 2021-2023 and will work together to assess recommendations from the Expert Advisory Panel's report, *Building Forward Together: Toward a more resilient Canada* to implement program improvement measures. The federal government gathered input from provincial and territorial governments as part of the process to propose a modernized federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements that will focus more on prevention and mitigation efforts to strengthen community resilience to future risks. A Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements that is more flexible, adaptable, responsive and innovative will better support all orders of government and all Canadians.

Collective commitment toward a more resilient future

Disasters are increasing in frequency and severity, and multiple reports project that their associated impacts and costs will grow. Acknowledging this fact and viewing emergency management and disaster risk reduction through the lens of climate change adaptation is crucial to keeping the population safe. Disasters can have local, regional, or country-wide impacts, which underscores the need for readiness and whole-of-society collaboration. Together, the Strategic Actions within this document will promote the reduction of disaster risk and ensure that Canadian communities are more resilient and better prepared to successfully navigate a climate-impacted future. They also provide common objectives to better mitigate the economic and social impacts of disasters. By focusing on these five Strategic Actions, Federal-Provincial-Territorial governments may take actions aligned with their respective and collective commitments within the Emergency Management Strategy, creating a path toward a more resilient future by 2030.