

Towards Action on Floodplain Resilience in the Lower Mainland

Following discussion at the November 2025 Regional Forum convened by the Lower Fraser Floodplains Coalition, a Joint Statement for Action on Floodplain Resilience in the Lower Mainland has been prepared by the Coalition.

This document includes:

1. A **background note** about the Joint Statement for Action on Floodplain Resilience in the Lower Mainland (pages 1-3); and
2. The **Joint Statement** for Action on Floodplain Resilience in the Lower Mainland (pages 4-5)

Background Note

Joint Statement for Action on Floodplain Resilience in the Lower Mainland

1. Purpose

The aim of the Joint Statement for Action on Floodplain Resilience in the Lower Mainland (the Joint Statement) is to express a unified regional voice across local governments and First Nations, and support advocacy to federal and provincial governments for stable, long-term investment in flood resilience that protects people, communities, and ecosystems from flood risks.

The Joint Statement is an opportunity for local government and First Nations leadership from across the region to send a clear message:

- we are ready to work together as a region to build flood resilience for our communities,
- we know what we need, and
- federal and provincial governments must step up to protect this region of national significance with a program that reflects the magnitude of the task.

2. Background

The Lower Mainland is a region of *national significance*. It is Canada's primary Pacific trade gateway, moving hundreds of billions of dollars in goods each year and a vital link in supply chains that reach across the nation. Our region is also a major contributor to both national food security and biodiversity with floodplains that sustain major agricultural production and wild salmon ecosystems that are foundational to the cultural identity of First Nations in this region. The region is critical to Canada's economy, culture and resilience in a changing climate.

Yet our region is extremely vulnerable to growing flood risks (coastal, riverine, extreme rain events) related to aging flood control infrastructure, climate change, and development pressures on floodplains. Other floodplain regions around the world have shown that proactive, integrated flood management—working with nature and using the complete toolbox of flood risk reduction measures—is both effective and cost-effective.

The catastrophic floods of November 2021 followed by significant events in October 2024 and December 2025 only reinforced the need for concerted, coordinated action. While many local governments and First Nations are taking forward-looking steps within their own jurisdictions and within their limited means, it is evident that **regional-scale coordination and investment are needed from the provincial and federal governments** to deliver flood management solutions for long-term, equitable, and multiple-benefit flood management.

Local governments competing for small pots of funding while grappling with growing populations and long-term infrastructure deficits does not add up to safe communities, security for critical infrastructure, or healthy salmon-bearing waterways.

The collective resolve expressed in this Joint Statement is grounded in mutual aspirations for the safety and wellbeing of all communities. This pathway includes reconciliation and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in decisionmaking for equity, stability and shared prosperity. The Joint Statement is based on the outcomes of seven dialogues with First Nations and local governments from July 2022 to the present.

In a time of global economic uncertainty, building flood resilience in the Lower Mainland is not a local ask — it is a matter of **economic competitiveness** that is important for the entire country. This region underpins Canada's economy and food security. Investing in flood resilience can sustain growth, attract investment, and avoid ballooning disaster costs that have reached multiple billions of dollars in the last five years alone.

It is time for the federal and provincial governments to invest in a dedicated, long-term flood resilience program for the Lower Mainland — not piecemeal funding, but a **coordinated investment program** that leverages resources and relationships, and the strengths and good will of Lower Mainland communities. Working as a region opens up opportunities for incorporating nature-based approaches, multiple ways of knowing and holistic management as prioritized in the BC Flood Strategy.

Why a Joint Statement?

- **Strength in unity:** A collective statement amplifies regional influence by showing widespread alignment on the need for urgent flood resilience planning and funding and readiness to do the work
- **Shared responsibilities:** Flooding affects all communities across the floodplain—urban and rural, upstream and downstream, First Nation and non-First Nation.
- **Advocate for better solutions:** Together, we can push for strategic investments that prioritize people’s safety, environmental health, and climate-ready infrastructure that works with nature, not against it.
- **A region ready for long-term resilience:** Together we can shift the provincial, federal and private focus from short-term, reactive measures and funding programs that pit communities against each other to proactive, forward looking, collaborative floodplain management and resilience focused on long-term mutual benefits.

How can the Joint Statement leverage change?

The Joint Statement can be a foundation for advocacy, and help bring attention and resources to the Lower Mainland region. Across the country, regions and communities are speaking up about the economic and social opportunities that can flow from sustained, strategic investments. The multiple benefits, locally, regionally and nationally of resilience for our region should be part of that conversation.

A collective, coordinated approach increases pressure on federal and provincial governments to address their responsibilities for managing flood risk in the Lower Mainland pro-actively, with strategic investment and support, rather than waiting for disasters.

JOINT STATEMENT ON ACTION FOR FLOODPLAIN RESILIENCE IN THE LOWER MAINLAND

Preamble

We are Coast Salish First Nations and local governments from Yale to Semiahmoo to Squamish. Our communities are connected by the same waters. We share responsibilities to protect our ways of life and healthy ecosystems in our floodplains while managing the risks of flooding.

We stand together for a resilient Lower Fraser working together with *one heart and one mind* (Lets'emó:t; nəçəʔmət ct; Nuts'a'maat; Nch'u7mut). This is where people, salmon, and economies thrive together, for the long term, and decisions are made in partnership, not in isolation.

A single major flood in the Lower Fraser could wipe out over \$350 billion in economic value, disrupt food supply chains, and cripple key national and international trade routes — putting the safety and prosperity of the entire province and our country at risk. Flood risks are escalating as the climate changes: with major events in 2021, 2024 and 2025.

Local governments have been left with large and unfunded responsibilities for the operation, maintenance, upgrading and protection of critical infrastructure essential for the region, the province and the country.

First Nations across the region are forced to manage disproportionate and unacceptable flood risks to their communities as a result of historic and systemic inequities, and are often excluded from decision making about flood management that affects their Constitutionally protected rights and title, and inherent authority in their territories.

The Province has developed the B.C. Flood Strategy, but is not taking steps to implement it.

The Federal Government has signalled its desire to proactively build resilience in Canadian communities through changes to Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) that encourage mitigation. However these changes are profoundly inadequate to address decades of underfunding flood resilience in our region.

We can't afford to endure repeated disasters and hope to incrementally rebuild our communities.

Without action, flood events will continue to deepen historical inequities, expose our communities to danger, and damage infrastructure and ecosystems of salmon and non-human relatives that sustain our shared economy and wellbeing.

Our communities do not have the resources to meet these challenges alone. Yet we are ready to work together, and with the federal and provincial governments, to develop shared solutions, backed by investments in long-term resilience.

We call on the federal and provincial governments to:

- Recognize the Lower Fraser's resilience as a matter of *national and provincial significance*: urgently requiring attention, but manageable with practical measures, and essential for the long-term safety, and the cultural and economic well-being of all communities, the province and the country;
- Respect and uphold First Nations' title, rights, and leadership in all flood and climate readiness and resilience efforts and support continued work in the region to build relationships and implement UNDRIP (Declaration Act, UNDRIPA) for mutual long-term benefits, stability and prosperity;
- Address federal and provincial responsibilities to ensure the resilience of critical infrastructure essential for the region, for British Columbia and for Canada; and
- Develop a sustained, long-term investment program for the Lower Fraser adequate to support collaborative work across federal, provincial and local governments, First Nations and the private sector to achieve regional floodplain resilience that works with nature, not against it.

No single community can do this work alone. We know that our future depends on working together to build a safer, more resilient region and we call on the federal and provincial governments to step forward with us.

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