

PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES 2020

Emergency Management and Disaster Mitigation

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

CPWA Priorities:

- Provide dependable, predictable funding for long-term emergency management and disaster mitigation strategies that encourage collaboration amongst all levels of government and Indigenous communities
- Encourage a collective approach to emergency management, including the participation of public works agencies and professionals in all-hazards education, training exercises and development of best practices
- Encourage the development and coordination of timely information and tools to enhance and support the emergency management capabilities of municipalities, including coordination of Incident Management Teams
- Establish and fund a dedicated Canadian Public Safety Broadband Network (PSBN) to provide communications interoperability to first responders and public safety personnel
- Develop national cybersecurity guidelines/best practices and work with provincial, territorial and local governments to share threat information and provide technical support to protect computer networks and other related critical infrastructure

The scientific evidence is clear that one of the effects of our changing climate is an increase in the number and severity of natural disasters, including floods and forest fires. When Canada's public infrastructure is threatened by such disasters, public works joins other First Responders to safeguard lives and protect and repair Canada's damaged critical infrastructure. **This is why dependable, predictable funding for long-term emergency management and disaster mitigation strategies that encourage collaboration amongst all levels of government and Indigenous communities is essential.**

CPWA was pleased that Budget 2019 committed to investing more than \$150 million over five years to improve emergency management across Canada, including in Indigenous communities. It is our hope that future governments will continue this important commitment to preparing for and dealing with the aftermath of natural disasters, supporting the efforts of public works officials in their capacity as First Responders.

Although some First Responders may be more visible than others during emergency response operations, no single discipline functions totally independent of the others. Interagency coordination, support and cooperation are vital. For example, fire departments suppress fires, but public works ensures that there is water to put out the fires – and often maintains fire department buildings, vehicles and communications. Speed of re-entry is vital for citizens displaced by natural disasters. Public works professionals are responsible for re-establishing essential infrastructure. **Therefore, a collective approach to emergency management, including the participation of public works agencies and professionals in all-hazards education, training exercises and development of best practices, is essential.**

CPWA recognizes that the federal government is dedicated to working collaboratively with provinces and territories to support communities when disasters strike and that Public Safety Canada provides oversight

and guidance in the setting of exercise priorities and co-sponsors key activities with lead departments through the Emergency Management National Exercise Program. It is also important to consider the role of local governments. Public works professionals at the local level are responsible for many aspects of emergency planning and disaster response, including assessing damage to buildings and infrastructure; clearing and disposing of debris; removing snow in blizzard conditions ahead of police and fire services; securing critical facilities and restoring lifeline services; managing traffic and coordinating municipal vehicles, equipment and manpower; and ensuring a safe public water supply.

For example, the municipality of Rigaud, Quebec, suffered extensive flooding in 2017. In preparation for flooding again in 2019, Rigaud entered into agreements with nearby municipalities that were at low risk of flooding to provide back-up support. The City of Calgary, with help from the Government of Alberta, has undertaken numerous projects to improve flood resilience since severe flooding in 2013. Projects include upgrades to the Glenmore Dam, Bonnybrook Wastewater Treatment Plant and Roxboro Sanitary Lift Station, as well as adding new pump stations, stormwater outfall gates and flood barriers. Additional efforts by the provincial government that are assisting communities vulnerable to flooding are wetland restoration, new flood maps, improved flood forecasting models and an emergency managers' portal connecting municipalities directly to the provincial River Forecast Centre. **This demonstrates that the development and coordination of timely information and tools to enhance the emergency management capabilities of municipalities, including coordination of Incident Management Teams, is essential.**

Budget 2014 earmarked \$200 million over five years to establish the [National Disaster Mitigation Program \(NDMP\)](#) as part of the Government of Canada's commitment to build safer and more resilient communities. The NDMP and its four funding streams – Risk Assessments, Flood Mapping, Mitigation

Planning, and Investments in Non-structural and Small-Scale Structural Mitigation Projects – were established to address flooding but the program will sunset on March 31, 2020 and does not address other types of disasters such as wildfires. Budget 2017 earmarked \$2 billion over 10 years to establish the [Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund \(DMAF\)](#), supporting large-scale infrastructure projects to help communities better manage the risks of disasters triggered by natural hazards. But the minimum of \$20 million threshold in eligible expenditures makes it difficult for small communities to apply.

CPWA also supports recommendations made in a 2016 Report by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada that focused on the federal government's actions to support Canada's long-term mitigation efforts "Report 2—Mitigating the Impacts of Severe Weather", including:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada should work with partners to determine how intensity-duration-frequency curves should be produced for decision makers.

- Public Safety Canada, working with key stakeholders, should develop guidelines and standards for floodplain maps and encourage their consistent application in all provinces and territories.
- National Research Council Canada should incorporate climate change trends into the National Building Code's structural design provisions, to take into account the expected increase in frequency and severity of weather events that can directly affect buildings.
- Public Safety Canada should coordinate consultations with decision makers to better understand the information needed to support their disaster risk reduction efforts, including those related to severe weather.

Communication is increasingly recognized as a critical component of operating public infrastructure and public works agencies must be able to depend on reliable interoperable emergency communications systems that connect them during preparedness, response and recovery operations to other first responders, including law enforcement, fire, emergency

medical professionals, and other public works agencies. **It is crucial that the federal government establish and fund a dedicated Canadian Public Safety Broadband Network (PSBN) to provide communications interoperability to first responders and public safety personnel.**

Public works agencies are also responsible for many of the cyber systems that control traffic management, water and sewage treatment facilities, emergency services/communications, and other vital operations and services. These cyber systems must be hardened and resilient to the increasing threat of terrorism, as well as to damage and disruption from natural or technological disasters. **Therefore, it is essential for the federal government to develop national cybersecurity guidelines/best practices and to work with provincial, territorial and local governments to share threat information and provide technical support to protect computer networks and other related critical infrastructure.**