

Response From Paul Rasmussen, Assistant Deputy Minister, South Area, December 28th, 2018

From: [Executive Division Office, FLNR:EX](#)

Sent: Friday, December 28, 2018 9:47 AM

To: <mailto:norm1936@shaw.ca>

Cc: [OfficeofthePremier, Office PREM:EX](#) ; [Minister, FLNR FLNR:EX](#) ; [Minister, ENV ENV:EX](#) ; [Minister, PSSG PSSG:EX](#) ; [Minister, TRAN Phone TRAN:EX](#) ; <mailto:jsham@csrd.bc.ca>

Subject: RE: Danger in Sorrento, BC (ref: 244663)

Dear Bev and Norm Martin:

Thank you for your letters of November 29, December 3 and 5, 2018, to Premier John Horgan, Minister Doug Donaldson and Minister George Heyman, expressing your concerns about erosion and bank stability of the Newsome Creek watershed. I have been asked to respond and apologize for the delay.

I appreciate that the complexity and uncertainty of this situation is distressing for landowners and residents with homes and other property along Newsome Creek and in the village. Below I have outlined the current status of this unfortunate situation, the actions taken, and possible solutions going forward.

The Notch Hill Fire burned 1,020 hectares within the upper watershed of Newsome Creek in 2009. Salvage harvest that was completed in 2010 had removed approximately 65 hectares of forest, which was replanted soon after. In 2016, fall rains resulted in saturated soils and a high groundwater table that still persists, and in 2017, spring rain-on-snow events caused flooding of several creeks in the province. In 2018, elevated snow packs contributed to flooding. Elevated flows in Newsome Creek in 2017 and 2018 were similar to those experienced in creeks throughout southern British Columbia. High stream flows in 2017 and 2018 in the already steep ravine (15 to 20 metres deep) between Trans Canada Hwy (TCH) and Dieppe Road, coupled with unique geologic deposits (clay and silt over gravel) have resulted in over-steepening of the ravine walls and the potential for further failure of the slopes should additional flooding erode and undercut the creek banks. The erosion has caused several large trees within the ravine to fall.

As you mention, Emergency Management BC (EMBC) funded one geotechnical assessment in 2017 and two additional geotechnical assessments as well as a danger tree assessment in 2018. I also understand that EMBC approved funding for removal of the identified danger trees and that, as you mention, a Section 11 permit has been applied for under the Water Sustainability Act.

The authors of the three geotechnical memos as well as Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) staff concluded that Newsome Creek and the ravine in which it flows will continue to be unstable until geomorphological processes bring the creek into equilibrium with its surroundings. The geotechnical memo of October 6, 2018, recommended the following: owners of the four properties with permanent structures at risk consider moving them; the

creek channel above the TCH be studied to assess its stability; a feasibility study on how the ravine can be stabilized be undertaken; and the TCH culvert be assessed and/or stabilized.

With respect to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's (MOTI) actions, I understand that interim repairs to the affected roads and damaged culverts have been completed. A hydrologic assessment was completed for the creek to determine the appropriate culvert sizes for the side road crossings and the crossing at the TCH. As part of this work, culverts along the stream are being considered for upsizing in 2019. Additional engineering is required to confirm what is required for the culvert crossing at the TCH. No timeframe for this repair has been confirmed. MOTI's mandate is limited to the protection of the crossings. Proactive work to protect homes is the responsibility of the CSRD as the local government. MOTI's focus will be to ensure that the natural drainage in Newsome Creek flows in a manner unimpeded by its culverts.

The Water Sustainability Regulation of the Water Sustainability Act allows local governments to undertake restoration of a stream channel. As a permitting body overseeing works in and about streams in British Columbia, FLNRORD has provided approvals to several municipalities and regional districts in 2017 and 2018 for stream restoration projects such as vegetation and debris removal, dredging, and stream bank armoring. This situation is no different. This ministry strongly encourages the Columbia-Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) to apply for such works on behalf of its residents, supported by sound engineering principles and a robust environmental management plan.

To assist in this endeavour, my colleagues in EMBC have indicated that there are several applicable funding programs available to support the CSRD. These sources are described below:

- The Community Emergency Preparedness Fund is a suite of funding programs intended to enhance the resiliency of local governments and their residents in responding to emergencies and is administered through the Union of BC Municipalities. For more information on future funding intakes, please visit the website: <https://www.ubcm.ca/EN/main/funding/lgps/community-emergency-preparedness-fund.html>
- The Federal Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund is a 10-year, \$2-billion national program designed to help communities better withstand current and future risks of natural hazards. The fund will support large-scale infrastructure projects with a minimum cost of \$20 million. For more information, please visit: <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/dmaf-faac/index-eng.html>
- The Rural and Northern Communities Program is a component of the wider Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program and supports infrastructure projects in communities across the province that have populations 25,000 or less. For more information, please visit the website: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/funding-engagement-permits/grants-funding/investing-in-canada/rnc-program-guide.pdf>

Again, thank you for taking the time to write and share your concerns. In a similar letter to the CSRD, I have encouraged the CSRD to: investigate the provincial and federal funding sources outlined above;

undertake the hydrologic assessment and ravine stabilization assessment studies recommended by the EMBC-funded geotechnical memo of October 6, 2018, and; apply to the province for authorisation to undertake any works recommended in the feasibility study to protect its citizens, including vegetation removal and/or stream bank protection.

Sincerely,

Paul Rasmussen  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
South Area

pc: Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia  
Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource  
Operations and Rural Development  
Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
Honourable Claire Trevena, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure  
Rhona Martin, Chair, Columbia-Shuswap Regional District