

FILE CODE

WE3 & G1 - G.F. Downtown
Business Assoc - Flood
Disaster Mitigation

June 1, 2018



Flood Disaster Mitigation Downtown Grand Forks, BC

Background

The Grand Forks Downtown Business Association, consisting of business and building owners, together with Community Futures and Boundary Country Regional Chamber of Commerce met to discuss the impact of the catastrophic flooding of May 10th. The flooding caused severe damage to downtown economic and social infrastructure and dealt a serious blow to local businesses, many of which remain closed. The capacity to stabilize and resume normal activity depends on several factors, including the City of Grand Forks' ability to organize external financial aid and the speed with which normal business activity can resume. Given that 60% of the business owners have damaged and/or destroyed stores, their ability to create viable income over the important summer months is severely diminished. It is clear that the economic viability of our community is dependent on the support of all levels of government in order to recover.

Immediate Needs

1. Waiver of disconnect and reconnection fees for City of Grand Forks utilities; government intervention to have same waived by companies doing business in BC, charging fees for telephone and internet services.
2. Waive or defer City of Grand Forks property taxes or offer subsidies to businesses affected by this catastrophic event – many businesses have no income and no cash flow to meet this obligation.
3. Clean-up downtown core – sidewalks, streets, and back alley ways remain covered in dust and debris which can become airborne and exacerbate respiratory illnesses and cause further damage to surrounding property.
4. Interior Health to provide assurances with regards to health and safety concerns such as air quality and contaminants in flood damaged buildings.
5. Work together with local businesses that require dumpsters for demolition, removal, and reconstruction to ensure debris removal is done quickly but at minimum risk to both the public and the environment at no cost.
6. Flood insurance – if eligible overland flood premiums/deductibles are prohibitive for many businesses and several with insurance have had their claims denied. Financial aid is required, however many businesses are ineligible for DFA to help cope with the cost of repairs and recovery of property damage – where do we turn for help?
7. Provide ongoing security in the downtown core with RCMP, COP and private security firms at no cost to business and building owners

Long Term Needs

1. Storm drain backflow prevention – a complete risk assessment of the City of Grand Forks' storm water system to reduce the flooding caused by storm drain backups. Several businesses successfully sandbagged their properties only to be flooded as a result of storm drain backup and basement flooding.
2. Construction of better berms, embankments and dikes to prevent future flooding – what assurances do we have against future flooding protection?
3. Severe Flooding emergency notification and action planning needs to be improved – many businesses were never notified of the potential for severe flooding resulting in damage that could potentially have been reduced and/or prevented.
4. Income reduction and interruption assistance.
5. Incentives for trades and contractors throughout BC to work with local businesses thereby increasing the number of qualified skilled workers available to help businesses reopen sooner.

Conclusions

Before this event our downtown business district was a vibrant and thriving community as evidenced by the number of new businesses opening over the past two years. We are a large part of the economic engine that drives this city and we are resilient and determined to return bigger and better than before.

We cannot do this alone and need assurances that if we invest financially in our businesses, our investments will be acknowledged and the potential for future losses will be reduced. We need to be supported financially and assured there are future flood mitigation strategies being implemented.