



## Report to Council From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

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Date: March 14, 2022  
Subject: Support Flood Recovery that Creates Safe Communities and Healthy, Resilient Ecosystems

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### Purpose

To request Port Moody advocate to the BC Government to take a “build back better” approach to the increased flooding events that we have experienced and will continue to experience in order to weave natural solutions, habitat restoration, and climate adaptation and mitigation.

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### Recommendation

**THAT the following resolution regarding support for flood recovery that creates safe communities and healthy, resilient ecosystems be endorsed by the City of Port Moody and forwarded to Provincial Ministers involved in environmental protection, fisheries and agriculture, and the Union of BC Municipalities, as recommended in the report dated March 14, 2022 from the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Support Flood Recovery that Creates Safe Communities and Healthy, Resilient Ecosystems:**

**WHEREAS the tragic flood events of November 2021 highlighted that conventional approaches to managing floods have not ensured public safety, lead to province-wide disruptions of infrastructure and food supply, weakened our flood storage capacity in the floodplain and further degraded the ecological health;**

**AND WHEREAS many flood control structures (e.g. dikes and associated floodgates and pumps) are unnecessarily blocking access to important habitats for wild salmon (e.g., over 1,500 km in the lower Fraser River floodplain) and many of these structures are undersized for climate related increases in flooding as experienced during the November 2021 floods;**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM call on the Federal and Provincial governments to ensure flood control projects provide multiple benefits to communities by aligning flood control funding and criteria with other core objectives such as reconciliation, wild salmon recovery, biodiversity, green infrastructure, climate adaptation and mitigation, emergency preparedness and “building back better”;**

**AND THAT Fisheries and Oceans Canada, BC Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship co-create Best Management Practices to provide technical guidance for local governments on achieving short-and long-term flood recovery needs that are multi-beneficial and improve climate adaptation needs.**

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## Background

Port Moody has made great strides in environmental protections, at the local, provincial and federal levels. As an interface community we understand the importance of protecting ecosystems holistically. We are also a city where staff and community work hard at salmon habitat enhancement and protections while investigating how to make our infrastructure more resilient to our changing climate. We are also a city that understands that our waterways are multijurisdictional and not every community has the same resources or context that we do.

In the past we have called on the province to prioritize fish-friendly infrastructure in planning, which was endorsed at UBCM. That was before the 2021 flooding that decimated our neighbouring communities; 1 in 100 year flooding is becoming more common with climate change, which we will collectively need to grapple with. This motion to the province goes farther than our previous advocacy, to enshrine “building back better” into flood recovery and also provide local governments with resources and guidance on what needs to be done.

## Discussion

The dramatic flood events in B.C. in November 2021 confirm that existing approaches to prepare for and manage floods are inadequate. The costs of a major flood event far outweigh the costs of effective flood mitigation with the recent floods estimated at \$7.5B in damages making it the costliest natural disaster in Canadian history.

We are now at a crossroads. We can ignore the clear messages of these events, or we can move forward with recovery in a way that supports public safety, healthy communities and ecosystems, and B.C.’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) commitments.

The umbrella of “Building Back Better” offers principles that can get us on track. The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have adopted the United Nations’ Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction to guide disaster risk reduction. A key concept of the Framework is to “build back better” during recovery to reduce future risk and enhance resilience.

Over the longer term this means a shift to integrated flood management that yields resilience and multiple co-benefits.

In the short term this means clear commitments from federal and provincial leadership, support for strategic action, and immediate attention to funding criteria and programs. In seeking these

actions it is integral to uphold First Nations leadership and priorities in flood recovery and management.

Regulators and funding programs do not currently require that upgrades to existing flood control structures be fish-friendly or employ nature-based solutions. Adjustments to funding criteria and regulatory guidance will ensure that funds are not spent on renewed fish barriers and on pumps that kill fish. Many of the affected salmon populations are designated as endangered or threatened and require rebuilding. Recovery of endangered wild salmon populations is a federal and provincial government priority, but when existing flood control structures are upgraded they are not required to provide salmon passage or to cease killing salmon. Funding and promoting fish-friendly flood infrastructure, nature-based flood control solutions, and restoration of associated habitats will rebuild wild salmon populations and improve water quality while mitigating flood risk from climate change on communities.

It's worth noting, investment in fish-friendly flood protection and associated habitat restoration is a proven and effective stimulus of economic activity. Benefits include:

- Economic activity: a May 2021 report<sup>1</sup> revealed that in 2019, the watershed sector is estimated to have directly employed 27,200 people (similar to employment in the oil and gas sector), more broadly supported jobs for 47,900 British Columbians, and contributed an estimated \$5 billion to the province's GDP.
- Short term economic benefits: data<sup>2</sup> from the United States show that jobs and other economic spinoffs from watershed restoration projects are equivalent to other kinds of public infrastructure works. For example, a \$1M investment in watershed restoration creates between 13 and 22 jobs, and \$2M to \$3.4M in economic activity.
- Investments in nature-based solutions are estimated to be 50% cheaper than traditional grey infrastructure, known to appreciate over time and therefore provide better value for money.<sup>3 4 5</sup>
- Climate adaptation: nature-based and salmon-safe flood control protects communities from climate-related flooding and boosts the resilience of B.C. wild salmon to climate impacts.
- Advancing reconciliation: healthy salmon populations and healthy watersheds are of vital importance to numerous First Nations whose communities are disproportionately impacted by flooding. Investment in fish-friendly flood protection provides local jobs to First Nations technicians.
- Protecting and revitalized B.C.'s wild salmon populations while improving water and habitat quality, protecting communities, and increasing watershed security.
- Improved recreation and aesthetics, and the rebuilding of biodiversity through supporting other at-risk fish and wildlife populations.

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<sup>1</sup> [Working-for-Watersheds-Full-Report.pdf \(globeseries.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund](#) (NOAA)

<sup>3</sup> [How Can Investment in Nature Close the Infrastructure Gap?](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Combatting Canada's Rising Flood Costs: Natural Infrastructure is an Underutilized Resource](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Benefits of Adopting Natural Infrastructure](#)

Strong support for this work exists among First Nations, local government, unions, other stakeholders and the general public. In 2019, B.C's Wild Salmon Advisory Council endorsed investing in the Connected Waters Initiative to restore critical salmonid habitats. In June 2021 a report from the federal Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans include recommendations for federal and provincial involvement in flood control upgrades and coastal restoration. The motion builds on that work.

### Other Option(s)

THAT the report dated March 14, 2022 from the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Support Flood Recovery that Creates Safe Communities and Healthy, Resilient Ecosystems be received for information.

### Financial Implications

None.

### Communications and Civic Engagement Initiatives

None.

### Council Strategic Plan Objectives

Council's strategic plan objectives are met by demonstrating dedication to:

- Courage to lead and embrace new ideas;
- Climate justice and resilience;
- Ecosystem protection; and
- The health and wellness needs of residents.