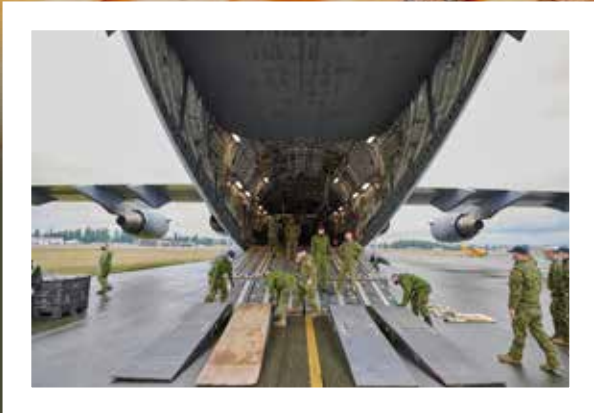


# Stronger Together.

**The Flood: ONE YEAR LATER**



# One year later, your gift is still making a difference.

The Abbotsford Disaster Relief Fund received donations from all over the world. Thank you, donors, for your support.



## TOTAL RAISED \$4,443,000



**INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS**

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**LARGEST CORPORATE DONATION**

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## STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER



One of the dairy cows that was rescued during the flooding of Abbotsford's Sumas Prairie birthed her own calf on Nov. 8, 2022 at Phillip Graham's dairy farm. (Jessica Peters/Abbotsford News)

# Life carries on at dairy farm where 200 cows died

## Calves rescued by boat now grown heifers having calves of their own

Jessica PETERS  
Abbotsford News

Phillip Graham recalls wanting to "save everything" on his Sumas Prairie dairy farm in the days before it flooded.

But when the main dike breached within a stone's throw from his land, he saw a wave of water coming toward him. He had already moved 240 cows from his 500-plus herd at that point and, in that moment, he knew choices needed to be made quickly.

"As soon as it blew, I was in the yard here and saw a wave. It was like – oomph! – it's here," he said. "We had been trucking out all day."

He, along with one worker and a couple who had become stranded, moved the calves to the heifer barn, which is a bit higher ground. Water had been filling up under the barn, and it would eventually be filled with several feet of water – he shows the water marks along the side of a barn, and the top line is near his shoulder.

Thankfully, by the Thursday of the floods (Nov. 18), they were able to get a small jet boat to the farm and start rescuing the calves. Just a few at a time were moved to a trailer on

a road, where they were trucked to farms in Chilliwack with open arms. Volunteers and veterinarians were ready with warm towels and hair dryers.

"When they left, they were a few weeks old," he said. "They were really small."

Some of them almost didn't make it.

But one year later, those rescued cows are birthing a new generation of calves. On a blustery cold November morning, in the safe cover of the heifer barn, an interview with Phillips about flood recovery was interrupted by a very familiar farm sound.

Just a few feet away, one of the rescued cows was calmly, quickly birthing a calf of her own.

Graham hopped into action and helped pull out the calf and drag it to its mom's head, where she quickly began bathing it. They don't always need help, Graham explained, but this one was born up against a stall door so he wanted to give them a hand.

The birth was over in just a minute or two and the farmer quickly checked over the calf.

"It's a boy," he said, the grin on his

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*"As soon as it blew, I was in the yard here and saw a wave. It was like – oomph! – it's here."*

---

– Dairy farmer Phillip Graham

face a mile wide.

The birth of a calf is always a special moment at a farm, but these dairy cows have already been through so much that it's hard not to see the miracle.

Graham wasn't alone that day; farmers across the Sumas Prairie were moving hell and high water to get their animals to safety, using every method possible despite worried warnings from officials like the RCMP and the BC SPCA.

Graham lost about 200 of his 500 or so dairy cows. In total, the area's

dairy farmers lost 420 cows. On average, there are about 23,000 dairy cows on local farms.

About 630,000 chickens and 12,000 hogs also died in the floodwaters.

At the peak of the flooding, more than 1,100 farms were under evacuation order or alert, and 150 square kilometres of farmland was swamped. More than 6,000 dairy cows were temporarily moved to different farms to keep them safe from flooding.

Outside Graham's heifer barn on Nov. 8, 2022, a winter wind was whipping over the prairie and the sun was shining. But on rainy days, Graham and other farmers are taken back to the days of flooding: the preparation and worry, the constant monitoring of the dikes and Sumas River, the instant floodwater when the dike breached, and the weeks of cleanup that followed.

It took a month to get the farm cleaned up enough to bring the Graham dairy herd home again and even longer to get the Grahams home.

And while the Disaster Financial Assistance program has yet to work out for Graham, like others, he said it was the initial outpouring of volunteer help that really got them on the road to

recovery.

If he had to list them all it would take pages, he said, but he notes that local churches were extremely helpful, along with a large group of about 50 hunters and a group of students from Yale secondary.

At one point, there were about 100 volunteers on his farm, and he watched in awe as they shoveled mud and fixed things quickly and efficiently.

He and his neighbours do worry about where the next breach site could be, the next time a big rain fills the dike system or if the Sumas River swells to high levels again.

"We found the weakest link," he said. "But it's the rest that worries me."

Lana Popham, minister of agriculture, toured some of the area's farms on Nov. 8. She told media that most dairy and poultry farmers are now operating "back to normal" and the majority of annual field crops were planted as usual, but the sector is still "keeping its fingers crossed" for better weather this year.

In the meantime, life goes on at the Graham dairy farm, new calves and all.

## STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER



An aerial view of the Barrowtown Pump Station shows how the canal system and rivers flow. (Submitted photo)

**Jessica PETERS**  
Abbotsford News

Chris Kitt brushes off words like “heroics” when discussing how he and his neighbours saved the Barrowtown Pump Station a year ago.

They just saw a problem and worked on a solution, he explains, like they would in any situation.

“I knew my home was safe, and I knew there were people suffering in Sumas Prairie,” he says. “It was kind of the motivation for me to keep things going. We were putting in 18-hour days for the first few days.”

Most people will have never even seen the Barrowtown Pump Station, much less understand the important dual roles the infrastructure plays, one in agriculture irrigation and one in flood management.

It’s only ever noticed by the handful of people who live in Barrowtown, a dead-end neighbourhood at the most northeastern point of Abbotsford. When Sumas Lake existed, the area was a beachhead. The station is tucked at the base of Sumas Mountain, just north of Highway 1 and west of the Vedder Canal; out of sight, out of mind.

But all eyes were on the pump station last November, when an historic amount of water in both the Sumas River and the Sumas canal system pushed it into serious high gear. Everything hinged on that pump oper-

# Holding back the water

## Team of neighbours gathered together to save critical Barrowtown infrastructure



Chris Kitt at work surrounding the side door of the Barrowtown Pump Station in November 2021. (Submitted photo)

ating – and keeping its delicate wiring and sensitive electrical equipment dry.

With their own homes safe from flooding, thanks to a few extra feet in elevation, the residents rolled up their sleeves to help.

The city of Abbotsford was cut off from Barrowtown and the workers who run the equipment and computers at the station were commuting by boat.

The residents started out sandbagging, but quickly realized the job was going to require something more. They used one of their own excavators to barricade the main point of water entry into the building, which was a large garage door at the east side of the structure.

Kitt explains how the pump station works to regulate water flow throughout the Sumas Prairie and even beyond.

The Sumas River flows to the station’s reservoir, where four gates open and close as needed. It’s the river’s final point before converging with the Vedder Canal and then the Fraser River.

The water that used to form the Sumas Lake also ends up at Barrowtown, via the snaking – but well-planned – Sumas canal system. This diverted water system is used to irrigate the local farms. In wet weather

*Continued on Z5*

STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER

# 'It was fight or flight,' and they chose to fight

From Z4

er, the station's four pumps push that water out into the reservoir where it meets with the Sumas River and carries along to the Fraser River. And in dry weather, the pump can pull water from the Sumas River back into the canals.

The system has never had to deal with so much water in both waterways before. Gravity couldn't drain the reservoir. The pressure was on.

And the four pumps worked harder than ever.

So did the residents of Barrowtown.

"It was fight or flight, and our neighbours and ourselves, we chose to fight," he says. "We just knew if we had a chance to help, we would do it."

And it's a good thing they did, and that the city workers were able to find a way there. The giant pumps are electric and the building was taking on water. If they lost the Barrowtown pumps, there would still be floodwater on the Sumas Prairies today.

Eventually more help arrived, and they all worked through

the night on Nov. 16, including the Canadian Armed Forces. In total, Kitt and the others worked on protecting the pump for about seven or eight days.

Kitt recalls the moment the dike breached and flooded the prairie. He was standing on the road, watching water pour through a hole when it just stopped, like a tap turning off. The water line receded back, fairly quickly.

About 20 minutes later he got a call that the dike had burst.

Like everyone else affected by the flood – whether farmer, resident, business owner or first responder – Kitt feels the anxiety when it rains. When he looks back, he says the real heroes of the Barrowtown Pump Station are the city workers who kept the machines working.

"They were on high for two weeks straight and they never had been on high for more than 15 minutes," he said. "They did their jobs under pressure, and they did it amazingly. Our job wouldn't have looked as good if they weren't doing their job, too."



Gabions are still in place along North Parallel Road in Abbotsford leading to Barrowtown. (Jessica Peters/Abbotsford News)



The Barrowtown Pump Station is back to normal operations, but was at the centre of the flooding disaster in Abbotsford in November 2021. (Jessica Peters/Abbotsford News)



Cam Raines (left) and Chris Kitt worked hard to protect the Barrowtown pump station in November 2021. (Submitted photo)

ONE YEAR LATER...

# One Year Stronger.

## Thank you to all our Hometown Heroes!



**Michael de Jong**  
MLA Abbotsford West  
604.870.5486

## Strength in Community



"In November of 2021, Abbotsford citizens demonstrated **Strength in Community** in many ways as we navigated the historic floods together.

As the AbbyPD team set out to do their jobs, they were met with support and encouragement from the people of Abbotsford and our neighbouring communities.

We are grateful for all of the support received during that time and are proud to walk alongside the citizens of Abbotsford."

*Chief Constable Mike Serr*



## STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER



Farmers impacted by the November 2021 floods were invited to share their experiences with the Flood Stories project at UFV. The photo shows the area of Marion and Campbell roads on Nov. 22, 2021. (Vikki Hopes/Abbotsford News)

# UFV project encourages flood-impacted farmers to share stories

Vikki HOPES  
Abbotsford News

A project at University of the Fraser Valley has been collecting stories from farmers and their families impacted by the November 2021 floods.

The Flood Stories project is led by Dr. Michelle Superle, an English professor and research associate with the UFV Food and Agriculture Institute.

Submissions were accepted until Nov. 4, and winners were announced

## Initiative also included the Expressive Arts Contest

Nov. 14 (after press deadline).

The project invited Fraser Valley farmers and their families who were affected by the November 2021 extreme flooding events to share their experiences in spoken, written and artistic format.

The project used a narrative approach – developed in consultation with narrative therapy expert Dr. Stephen Madigan – to better un-

derstand how Abbotsford farmers have been impacted by the floods and what they need to begin thriving again.

“We recognize that the flood was a very unusual and traumatic experience for many people, both those whose properties flooded and those who observed their fellow citizens undergoing extreme stress,” Superle said.

“We think it’s important, as the

first anniversary of the flood approaches, to tell those stories, record them for posterity, and learn from them. Telling their story can also be therapeutic for those affected.”

Submissions were also accepted for an art contest that was part of the Flood Stories project.

The Expressive Arts Contest was open to kids from kindergarten to Grade 12, as well as UFV students,

staff, faculty and alumni.

It was the final component of the Flood Stories project.

The project also offered Writing as a Way of Healing workshops and opportunities for farmers to share their stories through interviews with Superle and her research team.

Participants will have their stories and images displayed on the project webpage (search “Flood Stories Project” at [ufv.ca](http://ufv.ca)) and on campus at UFV, as well as other locations throughout Abbotsford.



LEPP  
FARM  
MARKET

Artwork by Jessica Boon

This piece is focused on an experience my family had during the flood. We live on a farm in the Matsqui Flats, next to a pumpkin field that my father helps take care of. This piece is made to represent exactly how it felt. Adorably sad, the hysterical setting of our home that morning.

An excerpt from “Hysterics” a submission by Jessica Boon to UFV’s Expressive Arts Contest, part of The Flood Stories project.

[www.leppfarmmarket.com](http://www.leppfarmmarket.com)

# Disaster Relief Fund raises \$4.4 million

## Donations help farmers, businesses and organizations in recovery work

The Abbotsford Disaster Relief Fund (ADRF) that was initiated within two days of the November 2021 floods has raised a total of \$4.44 million from more than 6,100 individual donations.

The fund was established by the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce, the Abbotsford Community Foundation (ACF) and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV).

The ADRF set up an online hub and, thanks to local and national media coverage, donations started pouring in one every 20 seconds.

Donations ranged from \$5 from individuals to \$512,000 from corporations. Support rolled in from across Canada and as far away as Australia and Taiwan. In the first two weeks, the ADRF raised more than \$1.5 million to help those impacted.

Eighty per cent of the total funding donated, or \$3.5 million, has been distributed. Nearly \$2 million of that total was directly administered to local farmers and businesses, and the remaining amount was distributed to front-line grassroots organizations who have helped people most impacted by the flood.

Milt Walker, who led aid distribution at Gateway Church in Abbotsford, said the money from the fund helped community members kick-start their recovery.

"We recognized that when people rebuilt their homes, they were going to have to buy furniture and new appliances," said Walker, whose organization also used the money to help victims replace vital tools, equipment and structures. "We made an appeal to the Abbotsford Disaster Relief Fund, and they were there within a matter of days to support us."

Anita Nielsen, executive director of advancement at UFV, said the destruction that the storm brought to the community – especially to farmers and their land – was devastating.

"It was incredibly moving and



The Abbotsford Disaster Relief Fund is continuing to help flood-impacted farmers and others with their recovery efforts. (Submitted photo)

inspiring to watch our community come together so quickly to support each other through this dark period. As a coalition, we felt it was vital to provide immediate financial aid to flood victims while working alongside other community partners to assess and address the longer-term impact," she said.

The fund helped farmers replace machinery and equipment. Small business owners received funds to rebuild infrastructure and offset operating costs. Displaced families had access to necessities such as food and temporary housing.

"I'm most proud of the speed the partners of the fund coalition displayed in pulling it together and being nimble in terms of how we were able to respond to the crisis, raise the money and target those most in need," said Katerina Anastasiadis, CEO of the Abbotsford Chamber.

***"It was incredibly moving and inspiring to watch our community come together so quickly to support each other through this dark period."***

– Anita Nielsen, executive director of advancement at UFV

"It was important that people had access to funds in a quick manner and, since the disaster hit, many farmers have still not yet received government assistance."

So far, the fund has disbursed grants to more than 20 not-for-profit organizations, to over 200 businesses and farms, and to over 100 individuals and families who lost personal belongings.

The ADRF responded as the flood waters were receding and during the immediate and medium-term aftermath, but the fund is also designed to offer support in the longer recovery horizon.

The remaining 20 per cent of funds donated is available to help those still being impacted. Charities can continue to apply for funding through the

ADRF portals at ACF.

"We raised a small fraction of the losses incurred, but through strategic partnerships we were able to help hundreds of affected Sumas Prairie residents within a short period of time, sometimes with the first financial aid they had received after devastating loss," said Wendy Neufeld, executive director of ACF.

Alison Arends, owner of Crossroads Dairy Farm in Abbotsford, used funds from the ADRF to help distribute space heaters, blankets, clothes and diapers from a massive storage unit on her farm. She allowed farmers to temporarily move their cows to her property and served hot lunches for up to 100 people daily.

"There was a lot of activity and a lot of different hired hands helping around the clock," said Arends, who accessed two grants from the Chamber stream and one through the Gateway Church. "Even though things have improved, there is still a lot of cleanup to do and the situation is still not very good for many people."

While the cumulative cost of the damage in Abbotsford exceeds the ADRF's resources, funding is still available for victims. One year after the tragedy, the organizers continue to help rebuild the community while recalling the fund's initial impact in the local recovery.

"Small grants to farmers and businesses in the early days following the flood was some of the first financial help they received and gave them hope that they would recover," Neufeld said.

"We were able to adjust our systems and processes to respond to the high volume of donations and I am very proud of coalition staff and volunteers who helped us get this volume processed and tax receipts issued on a timely basis with very limited resources. We all worked extremely hard for the good of our community. That's what this effort was all about."

**THANK YOU!**  
To the countless volunteers,  
officials and heroes who helped with  
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**Reflecting one year after the Atmospheric River**

*"The level of dedication and care in recovery efforts that we have seen between our provincial and local governments and First Nations is truly inspiring, and I'm grateful to be surrounded by people who want to make their communities safer."* – MLA Pam Alexis, Abbotsford - Mission

**We will continue to work to build back better.**  
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# Samaritan's Purse still on the ground with recovery specialists

Jessica PETERS  
Abbotsford News

Samaritan's Purse Canada is one of many organizations of volunteers and staff who mobilized to help Abbotsford and other flooded communities last year.

They arrived quickly in town, helping out at the evacuation centre at Tradex. But they also brought in a specially equipped disaster response unit, which they used as a command centre to help individuals who had been evacuated from their homes.

That was operated at Northview Community Church, helping to give guidance to those who wanted to help but didn't know how.

The organization's response units are tractor-trailers outfitted with disaster-recovery equipment including generators, pumps, hand tools, and safety gear for volunteers. They trained volunteers who were then dispatched around Sumas Prairie to help with the massive job of cleaning up.

And the organization is still in Abbotsford, as well as Merritt, which also experienced devastating flooding.

Kandy White is one of two recovery specialists still working in Abbotsford, helping people with long-term recovery, including nav-

## Team helps with cleaning, rebuilding & spiritual care



Volunteers were trained by Samaritan's Purse to help out in the midst of the disaster. There are still two recovery specialists set up to help where needed. (Submitted photo)

igating bureaucratic red tape, connecting people with supports and continuing to help with cleanup.

"I get to help in whatever way is needed," White said. "We build the

bridge to the long-term recovery."

White has lived in Abbotsford for two decades and is dedicated to finding ways to help people, no matter where they are in their

rebuilding process. She has one year left with her current role with Samaritan's Purse.

"There isn't a short-term fix," she said. "You can't expect to come in

and expect things to be better in a year, or even two years. Samaritan's Purse is there to walk alongside individuals who have been impacted by the disaster and to support them with whatever they need."

Just this month, someone called her and said they were finally ready to go meet with the Red Cross, and wanted her to go with them for support.

"There are people who have slipped through the cracks, or that maybe were missed, or just weren't ready to reach out," she said. "Everybody is moving at a different pace."

White is getting calls and emails every day from people who are still looking to connect, or maybe need additional help as time goes on.

And they're doing a bit of outreach, too.

They have helped facilitate presentations at Semá:th elementary school for parents and teachers focusing on mental health training.

Children in the area are going through mental health issues along with their parents and teachers, White said.

Giving staff and parents the tools to help their children will go a long way to healing.

"It's one of the coolest things I've been a part of," she said.

# Stronger Together

Our sincere thanks to our local, provincial and national community for their outpouring of compassion, donations, support and resources in the aftermath of the flooding.

We'll continue working to provide resources, food security and counselling to those affected and collaborating with other organizations to prepare for the next disaster.

**Here. For each other.**

**Thank you** to our generous donors, community champions, volunteers, farmers, and partners for supporting our Flood Recovery and Resiliency work since the natural disaster in November 2021.

Throughout these challenging times and as we continue to help our communities recover and rebuild, we have strengthened vital connections - united.

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# Former mayor aimed to tell people 'the good, the bad and the ugly' during city's historic flood

As the public face for the disaster, Henry Braun says his goal was 'no smoke and mirrors'

Vikki HOPES  
Abbotsford News

Former Abbotsford mayor Henry Braun will always remember the shock he felt after hearing there had been a major breach in the Sumas Dike after torrential rains and flooding hit the area last November.

"I knew instantly what that meant, but I didn't know how big the breach was until probably 10 minutes later, and I heard it was like 100 metres. I thought, 'Hokey, doodle. That is a lot of water' because the water was stacked up already," he said.

Braun said he was "very worried" about the situation. During his 11 years on city council – three as a councillor and eight as mayor – he was well versed on the history of the former Sumas Lake.

The lake was drained in the 1920s to create new farmland on what became Sumas Prairie. The Barrowtown Pump Station was built to pump out the lake waters and keep the prairie dry.

But Braun knew there was always a potential for the lake to be refilled, as had previously occurred in 1990, when the Nooksack River in Washington state overtopped its banks and travelled north.

"I knew if that (Sumas Prairie) bowl filled up, that it could take a year or more to pump it out, so those were the initial thoughts going through my head. Then, of course, it was all the damage to the farms and farm houses and livestock," he said.

"And I started hearing about cows drowning and all sorts of other stories. So those are thoughts that I will remember as long as I have my faculties."

Braun was on high alert on the evening of Sunday, Nov. 14 and, as extreme rain continued throughout



Henry Braun (front passenger side) tours Sumas Prairie with Police Chief Mike Serr (driving) and Abbotsford MP Ed Fast. (Jenna Hauck/Black Press Media)

the night, he signed evacuation orders on Monday for portions of Sumas Prairie and Straiton.

He took a helicopter tour of the region that day, and the reality of the situation set in.

"It's one thing to hear people telling you that there's water on Sumas Prairie, but it's quite another when you actually get up in the air at 3,000 feet and have a look at it," he said.

City manager Peter Sparanese was with Braun on the tour, and Braun said the water was overtopping two or three kilometres of the dike like a "mini waterfall."

"I said to Peter, 'It's just a matter of time when that dike's going to

break. I just don't know where and when.'"

By Tuesday, the Nooksack River spilled over its banks, coursing across Sumas Prairie and resulting in the near-failure of the pump station, which couldn't keep up with the excess water. Braun issued an urgent plea that evening for anyone still on the prairie to leave immediately or they would be risking their lives.

But the pump station held overnight, thanks in great part to the overnight work of crews – including numerous volunteers – who had built a mini dam around the facility to protect it.

A few days later – on Thursday,

Nov. 18 – Braun issued another difficult statement, when he indicated that a levee would have to be built along Highway 1 for a stretch of 2.5 kilometres to hold back some of the floodwaters. The construction would have resulted in the expropriation of 22 homes, but by the following day, the water level had dropped and the levee was no longer needed.

Braun said the city was criticized for not meeting with the impacted farmers in advance of making the public statement, but he said there was no time, due to a rapidly changing situation that required quick decisions.

He said it was always his goal

throughout the disaster to tell people the truth at the press conferences he led every day.

"I didn't want any BS; no smoke and mirrors ... I said, 'We're going to tell the public the good, the bad and the ugly, and they deserve it. They need to know how bad it is and is it going to get worse or it going to be better?'" he said.

Braun toured the community every day, often with Police Chief Mike Serr, and sometimes at 3 or 4 a.m. when he couldn't sleep.

One of the first places he and Serr visited was WestGen, a livestock genetics company on Angus Campbell Road on Sumas Prairie. He said he will always remember the sight of cows being hauled out of the water by farmers and volunteers.

"These young fellows – they're big strapping young men that were neck deep, waist deep, in water, and that water was cold in November, and they were shaking like a leaf because hypothermia was starting to set in."

Braun said, at times, being the public face for the disaster was a "heavy burden," but he relied on his faith and the support of his wife, Velma, to get him through.

"Early on, I actually dropped to my knees in my bathroom and prayed, 'Lord, I need your help. I need wisdom. How do I deal with this? What do I say? What do I not say?' ... And I took it one day at a time and we got through those 36 days," he said.

Braun, who chose not to seek re-election in October, said he will most remember the way that the community came together to help one another.

"With all of the negative news that we're subjected to day in and day out, it restored my faith in humanity," he said.



Advocating for USA-Canada collaboration on flood mitigation is a top priority of mine in Ottawa.

We need to work together to ensure the stability of our rivers, farms, and ecosystems.

**Tako van Popta**  
MP for Langley - Aldergrove  
[www.takovanpoptamp.ca](http://www.takovanpoptamp.ca)



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# TIMELINE OF A DISASTER

## FRIDAY, NOV. 12, 2021

Environment Canada issued special weather statements warning of an "atmospheric river" bringing 75 to 120 mm of rain over the weekend.

## MONDAY, NOV. 15

The City of Abbotsford declared a state of local emergency as flood waters swept across the community. Evacuation orders were issued for portions of Sumas Prairie and Straiton, and several local roads were closed to traffic. The city first designated Abbotsford Recreation Centre as a reception centre for anyone displaced, but then moved the centre to Tradex. Waters breached Hwy. 1, resulting in its closure on Monday night between Sumas Way and No. 3 Road.

## WEDNESDAY, NOV. 17

A massive early-morning fire consumed Fraserway RV's holding centre near the flooded Hwy. 1, just east of Whatcom Road. Plumes of thick black smoke could be seen from miles away. Braun declared that the situation on Sumas Prairie remained "critical," but the pump station was holding, with all four pumps working at full capacity. Overnight, crews had built a damn around the station to protect it as much as possible.

## FRIDAY, NOV. 19

Flood levels dropped six inches overnight, and plans to build the levee were pushed aside. Instead, crews – including Canadian Armed Forces personnel – worked to build a temporary replacement for the Sumas Dike in the area of Marion and No. 4 roads. Approximately 120 soldiers were expected to arrive in the community. Water levels continued to drop slightly over the weekend.

## TUESDAY, NOV. 23

The mayor indicated that the dike repairs were about 80 per cent complete, as the city prepared for more heavy rain in the coming days.

## SATURDAY, NOV. 27 & SUNDAY, NOV. 28

Another 120 mm of rain was recorded over the weekend. The city of Sumas in the U.S. sounded its flood siren on Nov. 28 after the Nooksack River again breached its banks. An evacuation order was issued for Huntingdon Village, where sandbags were placed along the railroad tracks. But the water from the U.S. side didn't arrive as quickly as anticipated. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure built a "Tiger Dam" across Highway 1 near Cole Road on Sunday night to try to keep floodwaters in the Sumas River.

## WEDNESDAY, DEC. 1

The total rainfall for November was announced, and Abbotsford recorded the most it had ever received in a month – 540 mm, one-third of the city's typical annual rainfall. Several road closures and evacuation orders/alerts remained in place, including along North Parallel Road near Whatcom Road.

## FRIDAY, DEC. 3

The city announced its Return Home Plan, and began by lifting evacuation orders for the northern portion of Sumas Prairie.

## WEDNESDAY, DEC. 8

Evacuation orders were rescinded for the south area of Sumas Prairie.

## SUNDAY, NOV. 14

The City of Abbotsford activated an emergency operations centre in the evening due to heavy rain and flooding throughout the day, and evacuation alerts were issued for several areas, including Clayburn Village, Sumas Prairie and Eagle Mountain. A rainfall warning remained in effect, with another 40 to 50 mm expected. By the end of the day, 100 mm of rain had been recorded, breaking the previous record for Nov. 14 of 48.9 mm set in 1998.

## TUESDAY, NOV. 16

Mayor Henry Braun announced that, in the midst of record rainfalls, the Nooksack River in Washington State had spilled over its banks and had headed north onto Sumas Prairie. As a result, the drainage pumps at Barrowtown Pump Station couldn't keep up, and the station was at risk of complete failure. Braun issued a desperate plea for anyone who had stayed behind on Sumas Prairie to evacuate immediately. Rescue crews worked into the night to save people who were stranded. In total, some 1,100 homes were evacuated.

## THURSDAY, NOV. 18

Braun announced that the city would begin building a levee along Hwy. 1 on Friday for a stretch of 2.5 kilometres to hold back some of the floodwaters. He said there had been several breaches in the local dikes, and water was continuing to flow across the border and fill up the former Sumas Lake on Sumas Prairie. The levee construction would have resulted in the expropriation of 22 homes.

## MONDAY, NOV. 22

Evacuation orders were rescinded for properties north of Hwy. 1 between Sumas Way and Whatcom Road, and crews continued working through the night with repairs to the Sumas River dikes.

## FRIDAY, NOV. 26

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited Abbotsford, meeting with Braun, Deputy Premier Mike Farnworth, Chief Dalton Silver of the Sumas First Nation and Chief Alice McKay of the Matsqui First Nation. Trudeau also visited the city's emergency operations centre and Clayburn Village, another area of the city that saw significant flooding.

## TUESDAY, NOV. 30

Braun announced that the water level on Sumas Prairie had dropped six inches in the last 24 hours. But the third atmospheric river to hit the region resulted in evacuation orders being issued for some properties on Glencoe Drive, as well as Castle Fun Park and the Clarion Hotel. Several roads were closed in the Matsqui Prairie region, but the work done in Clayburn Village held back the flooding.

## THURSDAY, DEC. 2

The Tiger Dam was removed from Highway 1, with no further heavy rainfalls in the immediate forecast. Highway 1 between Abbotsford and Hope reopened to traffic, although drivers were asked to limit their travel to essential purposes.

## MONDAY, DEC. 6

The city's local state of emergency was extended by another week, while evacuation orders were lifted for the central portion of Sumas Prairie. Water levels had dropped by almost six feet over the weekend.

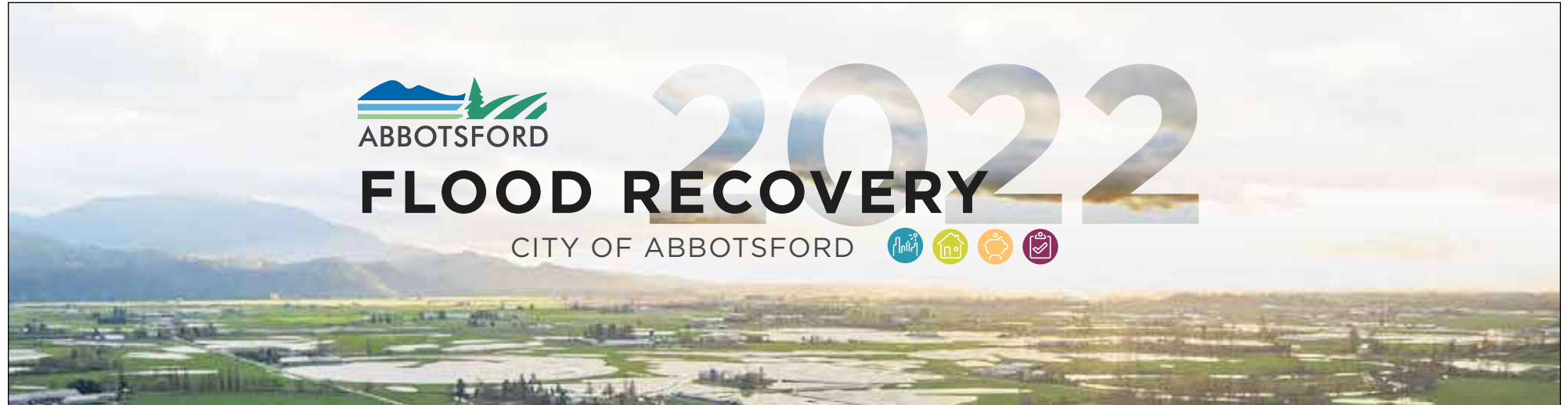
## FRIDAY, DEC. 10

Braun gave his last press conference to announce that the final set of evacuation orders had been lifted. "I do believe the worst days are behind us," he said.



# FLOOD RECOVERY 2022

CITY OF ABBOTSFORD



## MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



It is hard to believe that it has already been one full year since the flooding event devastated Sumas Prairie and impacted our entire community. The resilience of our farmers and our residents was tested through those weeks and months,

and yet it was inspiring to witness everyone coming together to support each other. Though the damage was widespread and the loss was tremendous, I am truly proud of how the people of Abbotsford helped one another through the emergency and through the subsequent recovery from this disaster.

I know the devastation for some in our community did not leave with the floodwaters,

and the ongoing challenges with land and operations remain top of mind for me while taking the oath of office and starting my time as your Mayor.

The City of Abbotsford has been working steadily over the past year repairing close to 300 city-owned sites damaged by the floods. As I write this message, we progressed through nearly 200 of these sites, with remediation plans in place for the remaining larger projects.

As the inclement weather continues to return over the coming months, all of us on Abbotsford City Council know that with it comes some nervousness and worry about a repeat event, especially since the experiences of the floods are still fresh in the minds of many.

I understand those worries. I would like to reassure all of our residents that our City is better positioned today than we were a year ago to respond to climate related events, and we are

as prepared as we can be for another season of atmospheric rivers.

Over the past year the City also developed a comprehensive long-term flood mitigation plan that was submitted to the Province of BC for funding. Our previous Council has been advocating to senior levels of government for the funding and support needed for the required critical infrastructure since June of 2022. As your new Mayor and Council, we are committed to continuing with that work, and to ensuring our City receives the funding it requires to build additional infrastructure to fully protect our community.

Ross Siemens  
Mayor

## INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY: COMPLETED REPAIRS

### DYKES & FLOOD MITIGATION



#### REPAIRS / RAISING

The City previously repaired 9 sites along the Sumas Dyke and the majority of the 17 kilometre-stretch between Barrowtown Pump Station and Vye Rd was raised up to 0.5 metres



#### SUMAS DYKE

Work to install a 150m long concrete/bentonite vertical panel wall in the centre of the dyke started in late October with completion mid to late November



#### BARROWTOWN PUMP STATION

Main pumps at Barrowtown Pump Station inspected  
Rehabilitation of Barrowtown Pump Station's office space from sewage and water damage completed

### DID YOU KNOW

We are required to inspect the dykes once a year and report the findings to the Province by the end of October each year; however, City staff trained in Flood Protection Works Inspections by the Province generally undertake two inspections per year to ensure dyke integrity- one pre-freshet and one post-freshet. These inspections look at the overall condition of the dyke including: the accesses, dyke crest, slope, fill, bank and erosion protection, appurtenant works and vegetation management.

These inspections have now been completed and the findings reported back to the Province.

### ROADS/BRIDGES



- 93 roadway inspections and repairs completed. Final paving will be completed when weather permits
- Clayburn Village gravel shoulder repairs completed



- Temporary replacement bridge installed on Lakemount Rd
- Structural and geotechnical designs of 8 remaining bridges on roadways have been completed with environmental applications underway

### PARKS



- Repairs completed at 6 parks (Hougen, Delair, Ellwood, Matsqui, Upper Sumas, MacDonald)
- Repairs and cleaning completed on the Discovery Trail boardwalk



- Bank stabilization and ground cleanup at Mt. Lehman Cemetery
- Design is under way for the Stoney Creek Bridges. The City is still working through insurance funding and will require environmental approvals



## INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY: COMPLETED REPAIRS CONTINUED

### OTHER

#### LANDSLIDES:

Repairs completed on 9 landslide sites

Remaining 8 locations are at various stages of geotechnical design, environmental assessment, and funding approval

#### WATER:

Installation completed on 1,100m of damaged water main

## INFRASTRUCTURE RECOVERY: DEBRIS & CLEANUP

### DRAINAGE WORKS



- Pump seal replacements at Matsqui Pump Stations
- Ditch bank stabilization completed in Sumas Prairie in various locations
- Ditch cleaning and sediment removal completed in approximately 15 kilometres of ditches in Sumas Prairie



- Culvert cleaning completed at No. 4 Rd and North Parallel
- Gravel and debris removal from McKee Road detention pond and Clayburn Village detention tank completed
- 11 irrigation pump stations were cleaned and repaired
- 2 irrigation control valve gates repaired

### OTHER

#### SEDIMENT REMOVAL:

Ditch and storm sediment removal along Clayburn Creek

Sediment removal and culvert replacements at Kilgard Creek

Sediment removal and reestablishment of slopes at McKay Creek

#### FLOOD & DEBRIS CLEANUP:

Sumas Prairie roadways and ditches cleared of wood debris, garbage, and hay bales

3,280 loads of waste and debris were received to the City's Temporary Transfer Stations over the 293 days the program was in service amounting to a total of 2,672 tonnes collected

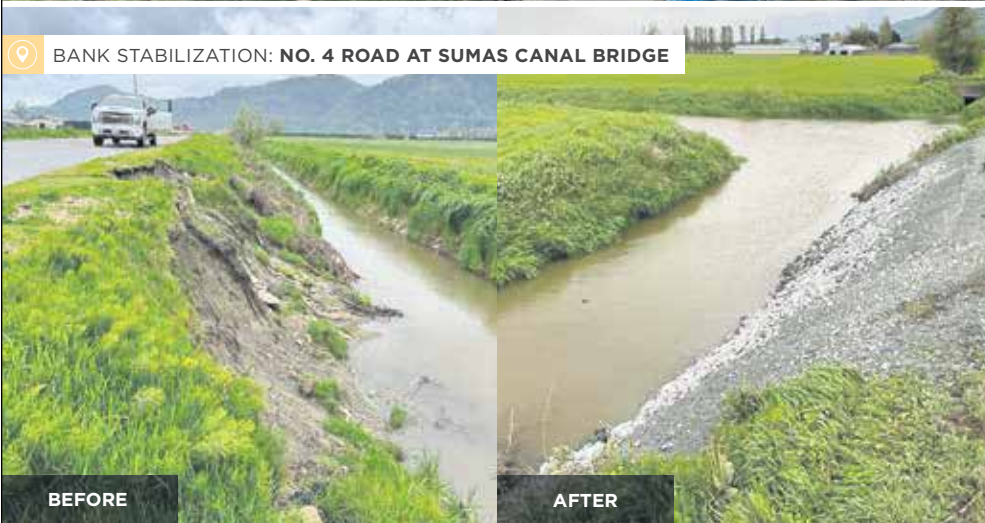
## STILL TO COME

We knew the road to recovery would be long and it would take years for all repair works to be completed. Repair work started immediately and has been ongoing, with priority going to safety-critical matters and major flood-prevention infrastructure (ie: fixing roads, dyke repairs, landslides affecting infrastructure, etc.). The City is now working on repairs with larger scope on longer-term projects. These remaining recovery projects vary in size and often involve studies, technical assessments and approvals from government ministries.





ELECTRICAL WORK: **BARROWTOWN PUMP STATION**



BANK STABILIZATION: **NO. 4 ROAD AT SUMAS CANAL BRIDGE**



TEMPORARY LANDSLIDE REPAIR: **CRANBERRY COURT**



ROAD REPAIR: **STRAITON ROAD NEAR WILLET ROAD**



DITCH DEBRIS REMOVAL: **NO. 4 ROAD, WEST OF NORTH PARALLEL ROAD**



DEBRIS CLEANUP: **SUMAS PRAIRIE**



LANDSLIDE REPAIR: **SUMAS MOUNTAIN ROAD AT COX QUARRY**



AFTER

# Long-term Flood Mitigation Options

In spring 2022, four comprehensive long-term flood mitigation options were presented to Council and introduced to the residents of Abbotsford. Over the next two months, public engagement sessions and surveys were hosted to provide residents the opportunity to learn more about each option, ask questions and give feedback. Following feedback from Abbotsford residents, farmers and business owners, and after additional technical analysis, a new hybrid option was developed, combining key elements of three of the original draft options. This new option not only meets flood protection guidelines in B.C., but also maximizes agricultural land and food security and minimizes the number of impacted properties.

In June, Council approved recommendations to move forward with this preferred option for long-term flood mitigation and shared it with the BC Government for consideration, advocating the multi-phased option start with building a Sumas River Pump Station. A new Sumas River Pump Station will address impacts in the event the City is unable to open the flood boxes, which is what occurred in November 2021 and also occurs during spring Freshet. Abbotsford City Council continues to strongly advocate for this important investment for the community so that we don't see the same devastation again.

## PREFERRED OPTION: Hybrid concept combining key elements of Options 2, 3 and 4

### Summary

Based on the key priorities identified through our public engagement sessions and additional technical analysis, this new Preferred Option is a hybrid of some of the key infrastructure enhancements and flood-mitigation concepts originally identified in Options 2, 3 and 4. Implementing this new hybrid option would enhance the City's existing flood protection system while maximizing agricultural land and food security, and minimizing the number of impacted properties. New dykes would be constructed through Sumas Prairie West, extending along the border, with Marshall Creek being separated from Nooksack overflow and Arnold area being protected. In the event of a Nooksack overflow, if this option is implemented, water is anticipated to be spread out through Sumas Prairie West, which is then moved through a narrow designated floodway to the Sumas and Fraser Rivers, via a new Sumas River Pump Station. Additional water storage and a new environmental area will be created by relocating the dyke along the north side of Highway 1. In addition to a new Sumas River Pump Station, the preferred option also includes the construction of three pump stations in Sumas Prairie West, resiliency improvements to Barrowtown Pump Station and replacing temporary works with permanent works along Sumas Dyke. The intent of this option is to preserve agricultural land and minimize impacts on properties by spreading out water.

This option would meet minimum flood protection guidelines in B.C. and incorporate enhancements such as dyke setbacks and floodway creation and provides a high level of overall protection. The level of protection offered by this option to Sumas Prairie Lake Bottom is up to a one in 200-year event (with climate change considerations).

### DYKES

- Permanently repair parts of Sumas Dyke (make temporary repairs from November 2021 permanent only)
- Modify parts of existing Sumas Dyke
- Reinforce and raise parts of existing Vedder Dyke
- Relocate parts of Sumas Dyke and setback to allow for flood overflow channel
- **New** relocated dyke along north side of Hwy 1 from Atkinson Road to floodboxes
- **New** dykes through Sumas Prairie West (West of Sumas River and East of Saar Creek), extending along the border and to protect Huntingdon area and Arnold area
- **New** dyke around Sumas First Nation Reserve

### PUMP STATIONS

- Upgrade resiliency of Barrowtown Pump Station
- **New** Sumas River pump station
- **New** pump stations in Sumas Prairie West, at Marshall Creek (two locations) and Saar Creek

### UNPROTECTED FLOODPLAIN

- Sumas Prairie West (private mitigation only)

### SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Hwy 1 to be raised from east of Sumas First Nation Reserve to Atkinson Road (by Province)

### DESIGNATED FLOODWAYS/ CONTROLLED OVERFLOW

- Create Lake Bottom designated temporary storage area
- Create smaller Sumas Prairie West floodway
- Create Sumas Prairie North floodway and storage area (from Atkinson Road to Barrowtown Pump Station floodboxes north of Hwy 1)
- Create controlled overflow to Lake Bottom via a flood overflow pathway
- Create controlled flows at border to Arnold Slough
- Create flood overflow route around the Angus Campbell Road area

### COST (ESTIMATIONS)

- |                                     |        |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| • Nooksack/Sumas Prairie Mitigation | TBD    |
| • Clayburn Village Enhancements     | \$32M  |
| • Matsqui Dyke Resiliency           | \$388M |

**TOTAL ESTIMATED COST:**

**TBD**

STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER

# WATER WORLD



The bridge to the Abbotsford Fish and Game Club was washed out and took months to repair. (Abbotsford Police photo)



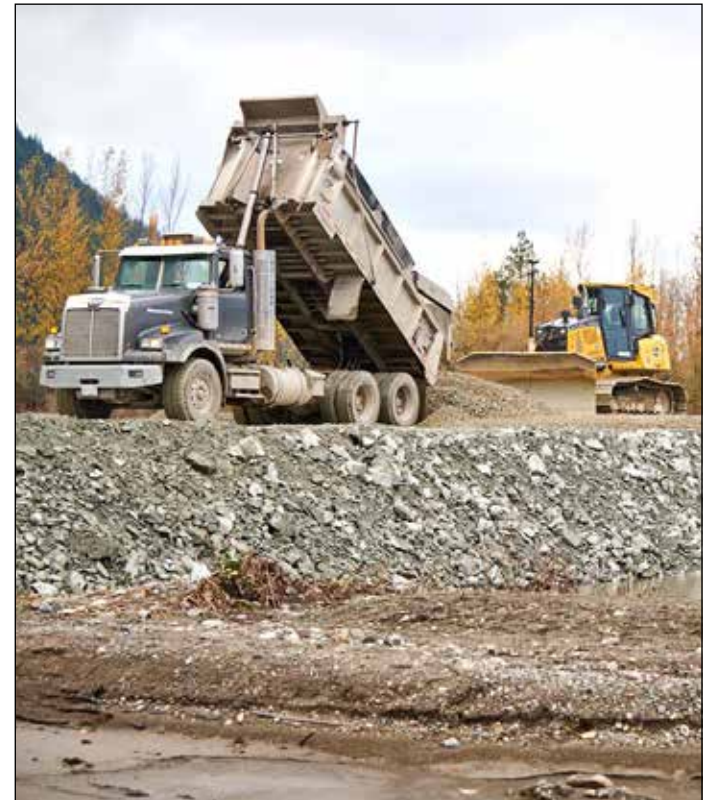
Sandbags along the railroad tracks in Huntingdon Village kept the floodwaters from reaching homes. (Wikki Hopes/Abbotsford News)



Military crews helped place a Tiger Dam across Highway 1 near Cole Road in Abbotsford on Nov. 28, 2021. (Abbotsford Police Department photo)



The Whatcom Road intersection just north of Highway 1 on Nov. 17, 2021. (Andy Holota/Black Press Media)



Repairs took place along the Sumas Dike, which was breached by the floodwaters. (Abbotsford Police Department photo)



Military crews did sandbagging and other work in Clayburn Village on Nov. 24, 2021. (Darryl Dyck/The Canadian Press)



A massive fire tore through Fraserway RV's holding centre near Highway 1 and Whatcom Road on Nov. 17, 2021. (Andy Holota/Black Press Media)



An aerial view of the flooded Sumas Prairie as seen on Nov. 19, 2021. (Abbotsford Police Department photo)

# 'When we talk about the flood, we feel like crying'

## One year after floods submerged Sumas Prairie, farmers still struggle to get back on their feet

Dillon WHITE  
Black Press Media

Last November, Jaswant Singh Dhillon arrived at his newly built house in a boat. He searched for priceless family items, but they remained unfound, drowned in over three feet of floodwater.

"We lost everything," Dhillon said. "The government had many warnings that the diking system could fail. Now who will pay?"

Farmers in the Sumas Prairie area say the emotional and financial cost of the experience endures one year later.

"We don't know what the future holds," Dhillon said. "It's financially and emotionally very difficult. We don't know how we're going to recover, when we're going to recover and what the future really

holds. So that uncertainty is causing, even within family, a lot of stress."

Dave Martens is a neighbouring poultry farmer on Tolmie Road and also suffered devastating losses during the flood.

"I had 40,000 birds that died in the barn," Martens said. "I don't really like talking about it too much because, believe it or not, it still affects me."

"When we talk about the flood, we feel like crying," Dhillon said. "When we remember everything."

Dhillon finished building his home just months before the November floods. The cleanup took six months and it still isn't completely finished. He spent upwards of \$400,000 to repair damage on his home. Dhillon said he received \$136,000 from Disaster Financial Assis-

tance (DFA).

The farmers say the DFA has been ineffective in the recovery effort because of their insistence on distributing funding for essentials only.

"We're all in the same playing field on that," Martens said. "My house on the farm - I got nothing for it. We're stripping the siding off the house because there's all this water sludge inside the walls. So they have still not given us (funding), and this is more than a year we've had an application in to Disaster Financial Assistance."

They say the DFA will not cover costs for multiple damaged rooms that serve the same purpose such as kitchens and bathrooms. They also say the DFA doesn't take into account the cost of original items. Dhillon bought a stove for

\$7,800 shortly before the floods and received \$500 from the DFA.

"They don't cover paint and they don't cover flooring because it's not essential," Martens said. "If they want us to be out here managing our farms and rebuilding them, we have to have them livable."

While the farmers rely on DFA for their houses, they rely on AgriRecovery for their farms.

Dhillon's 20-acre blueberry farm featured 15-year-old plants and was left bare in the wake of the floods. Davinder Singh Deol is also a blueberry farmer on the Interprovincial Highway just minutes away from Dhillon's farm. His farm was also devastated and required months of cleanup.



Jaswant Dhillon searches his home in the aftermath of last November's floods. (Jaswant Singh Dhillon photo)

Continued on Z17

## When the flood hit. Telecare was there to support Abbotsford residents

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STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER



(From left) Jaswant Singh Dhillon, Dave Martens, Davinder Singh Deol and Satpal Singh Sangha. (Dillon White/Black Press Media)

# Will take time before any income comes off flooded fields

From Z16

Deol bought blueberry plants from nurseries in the United States, but prices have increased due to demand, inflation and exchange rates.

"It's supply and demand," Deol said. "It was \$3 and (the same) blueberry plant is now \$5.40. So they're making money."

Since the blueberries can't be planted until spring, Deol can't get insurance for the plants he bought. The farmers said they don't expect to make income from their farms for at least five years.

Deol says the young blueberry plants require more care than the older plants.

"Small plants (need) more babysitting," he said. "Just like kids - diaper changes, food, everything. Plants are the same."

Martens said AgriRecovery has been more effective for the farms than the DFA was for their houses, but it won't make them whole.

"I'm not in the berry busi-

ness but many of my fellow neighbours here - they've been hit extremely hard," he said. "Their (recovery) is going to be much longer term. Just look at the field. I have to just look out the window. They're not going to produce any income off these fields for some time."

The farmers were eligible for an hourly wage of \$25 during the cleanup process under AgriRecovery. However, when their hours were submitted, they were faced with suspicion.

"We feel shame when they doubt us," Dhillon said.

Deol says farmers with larger properties faced longer cleanup times. The same jobs would require more hours due to the difference in property sizes.

"It's not a cookie cutter mould," Martens said.

"They're going to need longer help. And that would be my takeaway. It's just longer term income support."

Dhillon says the government is responsible for the damage done to their properties during

last November's floods.

"The government? They listen to our story very carefully," Dhillon said. "But when we need something, they do not care."

The farmers still paid property taxes to the city this past year.

"They gladly accepted our tax dollars and we pay a diking tax on all our properties for protection," Martens said.

"I've been here 32 years and, yes, we knew we were building on a floodplain. We knew we had to sign a restrictive covenant on that. But I also expected if they're taking our tax dollars ... that they were going to be investing that money into that (diking) infrastructure."

The heavy rainfall facing the area in the upcoming weeks and months worries the farmers.

"Even in the nighttime when the rain makes noise on the windows and roof, (it makes you nervous)," Dhillon says. "If a flood came today, (it would be the) same again."

We salute all the volunteers, officials and heroes who got us through the flood



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## Support for Small Businesses and Not-for-Profit Organizations



Was your small business or not-for-profit organization directly impacted by the 2021 BC flooding and extreme weather event?

If yes, please contact the Canadian Red Cross. You may be eligible for \$5,000 of financial assistance.

Apply at [redcross.ca/bcfloods/smallbusiness](https://redcross.ca/bcfloods/smallbusiness)

Call for info 1-833-966-4225

Deadline extended, apply by November 30, 2022

Thank you

to our amazing community, first responders and volunteers for coming together to support each other last year.



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## STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER



Abbotsford Police Chief Mike Serr speaks at one of the many press conferences that was held during the November 2021 floods. (Abbotsford Police Department photo)

# Police chief recalls how people banded together

## 'People would sacrifice their safety and well-being' to help others

Vikki HOPES  
Abbotsford News

If there is one thing that stands out most for Abbotsford Police Chief Mike Serr about the November 2021 floods, it's the people who banded together in a time of crisis.

The first responders who kept citizens safe.

The neighbours who helped bring stranded livestock to safety.

The volunteers who gathered to fill and place sandbags in at-risk neighbourhoods.

"It's emotional to this day – people would sacrifice their safety and well-being because they wanted to help a neighbour or a friend. I heard and saw those stories time and time again," he said.

Serr had just finished playing lacrosse on the evening of Sunday, Nov. 14, 2021 when torrential rainfall that had begun earlier in the day continued to pound the city.

He began to hear about areas, such as Clayburn Village, that were experiencing localized flooding.

The Abbotsford Police Department, Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service (AFRS) and other first responders were at the ready as an emergency operations centre (EOC) was set up in Matsqui Centennial Auditorium and evacuation alerts were issued for several areas.

But nobody could anticipate the

extent of the devastating impacts that were to come.

Monday, Nov. 15 brought rising floodwaters to the city, resulting in a state of local emergency being declared. Serr said he first realized the seriousness of the situation that evening.

"I remember staying late on Monday night and being out on the road and seeing firsthand that now it has gone from some isolated flooding to, 'This is going to have a real provincial impact.'"

Officers were being deployed throughout the city, blocking off flooding roads and making sure people were safe.

Serr ventured out that evening to deliver batteries to officers on the road whose radios were dying. As he drove east along Highway 1 towards Whatcom Road, water was starting to cover the freeway.

Serr drove as far as he could – about 300 metres from the Whatcom Road exit – and came across seven or eight semi-trucks and a couple of police cars that could go no further.

The police vehicles escorted the trucks to safety near the Sumas Way exit.

"I think we did four runs and, in the course of those runs, the water just kept getting higher and higher and higher, and it wasn't just the height of it, but also the power of it as it was

---

*"I just remember  
the hardiness,  
the endurance,  
the will ... We  
were completely  
mesmerized."*

---

– Abbotsford Police Chief Mike Serr

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flowing," he said.

"Every time you went, you could really just feel your truck starting to push off the road ... If you ever got a tire into the mud or the dirt, you were going to flip into the median, which was completely filled."

Serr had been unable to get the batteries to the officers, but the driver of a large tow truck volunteered to complete the task. Serr watched as the driver plowed through the water.

"You could see he was in trouble a bit, and he just made it. This was a big truck, and he was able to get the batteries to our people, and that was pretty heartwarming."

Over the coming days, Serr and Mayor Henry Braun toured the city

together daily to "get a proper assessment" of what was occurring.

Serr said he will never forget the scenes of people helping each other. He recalls standing alongside Highway 1 near a dairy farm on the south side of the freeway.

"I remember watching these boats and these ATVs moving the cattle and trying to get them onto the road and landed, watching these men and women who were absolutely shivering ... They were hypothermic – the wind was so cold off that prairie," he said.

"I just remember the hardiness, the endurance, the will ... We were completely mesmerized."

Serr also recalls the threat to Barrowtown Pump Station as surging waters coursed across Sumas Prairie after the Nooksack River in Washington state topped its banks on Nov. 16.

The pump station was in danger of complete failure. Teams of first responders, pump station workers, and volunteers placed sandbags throughout the night to form a dam to hold back the floodwaters.

"Those volunteers absolutely, in my mind, are heroes. They went over and above all night ... Talking to many of them a couple of days later, they were about, 'We did what we had to do. We'd do it again. This is what we do in our community,'" Serr said.

As the floodwaters abated, officers

continued to block off roads that were still dangerous and had to use their discretion on who they would allow through, depending on what roads they needed to use.

Serr said some property owners became angry at the officers, which he said left him, at times, "disappointed and frustrated."

"We were never going to have people risk their lives when the roads were so flooded ... I don't care how high your truck is. We don't know about the sinkholes or the stability of a road ... We do not want people losing their lives."

Serr said, once all the evacuation orders were lifted, some break-and-enters occurred at homes in the impacted areas, and officers were deployed to conduct regular patrols.

"It was absolutely devastating. You cannot go lower than to go (into the home) of somebody who has been so significantly impacted and to then victimize them further," he said.

Serr said he is appreciative of the teamwork from all the agencies involved, including AFRS, search-and-rescue crews, the City of Abbotsford, and police from numerous other jurisdictions. He is most grateful that no lives were lost.

"This was a time when you're proud to be a part of Abbotsford, part of the human race, just to see the incredible way people reacted," he said.

# SAR now working flood experience into training

## Search and rescue team now knows where the bigger areas of concern will be

Jessica PETERS  
Abbotsford News

The Central Fraser Valley Search and Rescue team learned invaluable lessons in the November 2021 floods that will be used for years to come.

While the group of volunteers had an idea of what a full-scale flood response would require of them, everything was hypothetical and based on smaller events.

During the flooding, the brave volunteers rescued more than 200 people, day and night. Putting in a dozen 12-hour operational periods – and organizing the mutual aid of seven other ground search and rescue groups – they actually lost count of the rescues. And they did this all while their own hall was under flood evacuation orders and they were relocated to the University of the Fraser Valley parking lot.

James Roe, president of

the organization, said they already have a document to work with moving forward.

“Our team’s safety officer developed a report that we have been using to help us establish pre-plans for future flooding events,” he told The News. “We’ve been able to identify areas that, when flooded, are more hazardous than others, which will determine how we decide to operate in those areas.”

He said they are also planning to improve the training levels of the current water rescue members “to help our members in the field be better prepared for the risks associated with flood operations.”

They were able to purchase a new jet boat thanks to the community giving back to them during and after the flooding. It is still under construction due to supply chain issues, but they have also acquired a new, unpow-

ered watercraft to help reach and rescue stranded people.

For all of their hard work, the group was also given the inaugural John MacGregor Memorial Award by the B.C. Search and Rescue Association earlier this year. The award memorializes MacGregor, Canada’s most decorated soldier for valour.

The Central Fraser Valley team shared the financial award with the teams that helped with the efforts: the SAR teams in Coquitlam, Ridge Meadows, Mission, Chilliwack, Hope, North Shore Rescue and South Fraser.

“It was a big test for us,” Roe said at the time of the award. “We hadn’t been faced with anything like that before, considering how quickly things evolved from going from telling people they needed to evacuate to actually going in boats in a matter of hours.”



Search and rescue volunteers are now working into their training what they learned during the floods. (Abbotsford Police photo)

As the one-year anniversary of the floods and landslides approaches, we are reminded of the enormous loss and overwhelmingly strong community spirit of those days. Abbotsford was hit hard. Farms were consumed by a lake, sections of roads, highways and homes were literally washed away. Throughout all of this, if there is one thing, we learned that we are resilient.

The outpouring of community generosity was awe-inspiring. Canadians look out for each other and readily gave everything they had to help one another.

We need governments to match that spirit with collaborative work outside the box to get things done. Specifically, we need to:

- Upgrade our pumps capacity accounting for climate change and population growth.
- Rebuild our dikes and flood mitigation infrastructure using sustainable technology.
- Establish a Canadian Armed Forces presence to quickly respond to natural disasters
- Improve protocols for working with all levels of government during an emergency and ensure public officials are educated on processes. Special care should be made in recognizing the small administrative capacity of towns in crisis.
- Create a First Nation liaison to ensure reserves are receiving the same real-time emergency notifications and assistance municipalities receive through Emergency Services BC.

Canadians generously gave their time, money, badly needed supplies, and shelter at the drop of a hat. As Member of Parliament of Mission-Matsqui-Fraser Canyon, I wish to send my deepest gratitude to all who stepped up and selflessly supported our community during our greatest time of need.

**BRAD VIS, MP**  
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# Abbotsford's Clarion Hotel rises from the flood

## Hotel veteran and Clarion general manager Danny Crowell reflects on last year's flooding

Ben LYPKA  
Abbotsford News

The images and footage from the areas surrounding the Whatcom Road freeway exit at this time last year were dumbfounding.

To begin with, the exit wasn't even an exit – it transformed into an unconnected island.

The floodwaters swallowed up much of North Parallel Road and the Sumas Prairie farms to the south near the exit.

The highway itself was unrecognizable and the businesses nearby the exit were either completely underwater or on the verge of submersion.

Abbotsford's Castle Fun Park, an iconic local spot for family fun, was among the hardest hit. The theme park had lakefront views, with the signature castle and mini-golf lighthouse still poking out of the water during the flooding.

Much of the theme park is still in recovery mode. The indoor mini-golf, which is located on the lower levels, was completely destroyed and is still being rebuilt. The batting cage, located on the west portion of the park, was also damaged from flooding.

Both the indoor mini-golf and the batting cages are still under construc-

tion. A reopening date for both of those attractions has not been set.

A little farther west on North Parallel Road is the Clarion Hotel and Conference Centre.

Regarded as one of the top hotels in the community, the Clarion boasts 116 rooms and suites and more than 24,000 square feet of conference and event space. The building has been used for everything from political rallies to wedding showcases and boxing.

It has also been the traditional home of the Toys for Tots event that helps Archway Community Services provide for the less fortunate during the holiday season.

But in mid-November of 2021 it wasn't holiday cheer on the mind of Clarion general manager Danny Crowell; it was survival – both of his guests and employees, but also of the building and business itself.

Crowell said he remembers leaving work on the evening of Nov. 15 and being well aware of the rising water levels nearby.

"I was keeping a close eye on the ditch that goes parallel to the hotel," he said, noting that it's a drainage ditch. "Before I left for the day I was out there with my maintenance guy



The lobby of the Clarion Hotel and Conference Centre saw several feet of water enter and create significant damage. (Danny Crowell photo)

and the ditch looked pretty full and was kind of teetering."

He drove to his Vancouver home and called the hotel to get updates. It wasn't good.

"At the front of the hotel's main entrance there is a set of stairs that go down to Parallel Road and, when I called an hour later, the water was halfway up those stairs," he said. "Another hour later and the water was over the stairs. About another hour later and the water was now in the lobby of our hotel."

Crowell said, despite the advancing water, that they still had power, and emergency officials with the City of Abbotsford told them to stay open as long as that was the case. He noted that everyone was safe and accounted for in the hotel.

Crowell drove into work the next morning, but was unable to use his normal route as Highway 1 was closed before the Whatcom Road exit. Crowell had to park close to a nearby path that connects to the White Spot restaurant located at Clarion and walk his way down. Before arriving at the hotel, he stopped to look down at what he saw below.

*Continued on Z21*

# THANK YOU.

Thank you to everyone in our community who have pulled together to support one another since the devastating flooding one year ago.



**BRUCE BANMAN**  
MLA | ABBOTSFORD SOUTH  
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*A message from your BC Liberal MLA*

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## STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER

# Abby Canucks players were staying at hotel

From Z20

“It was a bit of a disaster,” he said, noting he arrived at work at around 6:30 a.m. “While there was only a foot of water in the lobby, there was water three or four feet deep in the parking lots. And then, of course, all that water is going into our storage area, our maintenance shop and into the banquet area storage.”

Crowell said a service elevator that helps with food delivery and storage and a personal elevator used for the conference centre were also flooded. The bigger issue is that the mechanics to operate or fix the elevators were in the garage area and also completely underwater. Those elevators are still not yet operable.

As the day of Nov. 16 continued, the rain would not let up and that caused even more issues for Crowell and his team. Despite the encroaching water, guests remained in the hotel and that meant they had to be fed and cared for. He noted one employee literally had to swim to the hotel to help prepare food for people. Other employees continually swept water out of the lobby and other areas to keep it safe.

By the time his shift was over on Nov. 16, things were looking grim for the hotel and Abbotsford in general.

“I got home Tuesday evening (Nov. 16) and learned our water had been shut off,” he said. “The sewage was backflowing and other intersections were flooded. I know Whatcom had a big problem with that. And then the power went out and it

was time to evacuate.”

Crowell, who has worked in the hotel industry for over 40 years, said it was a numbing feeling to lock the front doors of the hotel – something that is such a rarity in his profession.

“The first responders showed up shortly after our power went out and that was probably the first time in the history of the hotel that our doors were locked,” he said. “I’ve worked in 15 different hotels and never locked the front door. We were told to stay away and that our hotel was now in an evacuation zone.”

Dozens had to leave the hotel, including a handful of Abbotsford Canucks hockey players who were staying there during the season. Crowell said he was pleased that no one was hurt at his hotel during the floods but that his heart broke for the nearby farmers who were so badly hit.

As the water began to recede and several days passed, Crowell returned to the hotel but used it as a base of communications for his employees. He said several staff members live in Chilliwack, so they would have been unable to come to work regardless. He continued to send out communication notices to his employees and provide updates about what was happening at the site.

The conference centre was able to reopen on Dec. 9 and an official reopening for the hotel occurred on Feb. 10. Months of construction work and insurance helped that become possible. The damage

was estimated to be about \$6 to \$7 million. The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the reopening saw then-mayor Henry Braun, as well as Brian Leon, president of Choice Hotels Canada, attend.

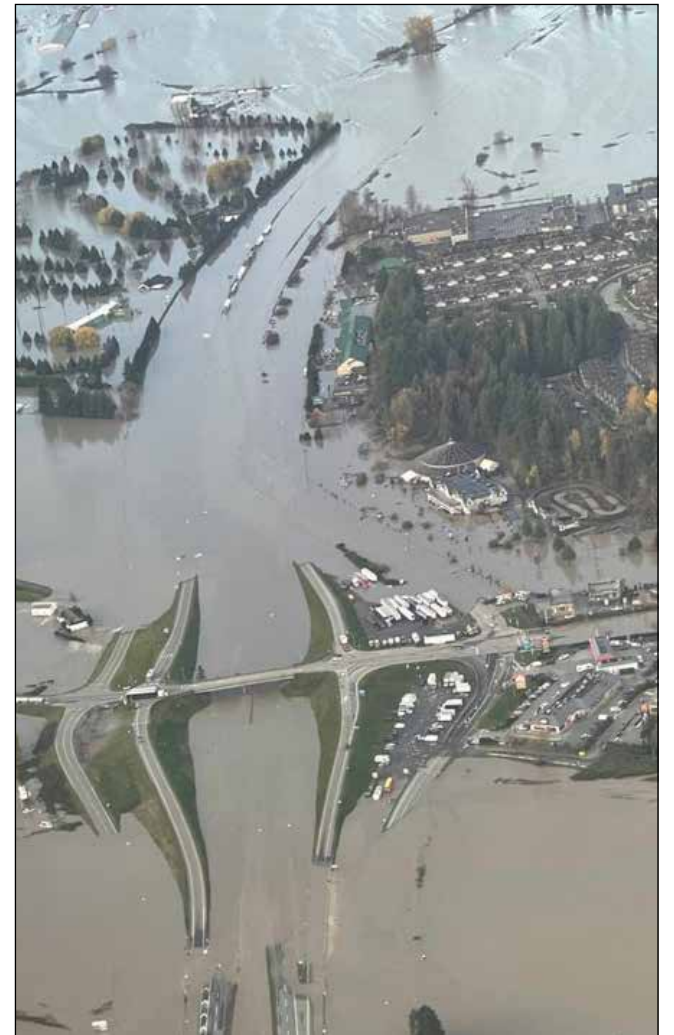
The facility went on to host the Business Excellence Awards on the evening of Feb. 10. Crowell said it was one of the most bizarre but unforgettable experiences of his career.

“It was very strange, no question,” he said. “But I’m always going to remember the way everybody pulled together and just got it done. That, to me, represents the hotel industry in a nutshell. We do whatever we have to in order to get the job done. It’s been described to me before as a duck swimming – on top of the water it looks nice and calm, but underneath you’re paddling like hell to keep afloat.”

In the months since reopening, Crowell said business is booming.

“We’re now doing better than we were in 2019,” he said. “To do the comparisons, our occupancy, our revenues, and our banquet business have almost all come back. It’s a testament to the people that work here and the job they do looking after our guests. They’re all back and we’re happy and busy as heck.”

Crowell said the success is a little bittersweet as he is set to retire in February. But every November from now on he will think back to the flood and how his hotel and the community of Abbotsford survived and then thrived.



The Whatcom Road exit in east Abbotsford was transformed into waterfront property during last year's flooding. (Sophia Middleton photo)

## A thank you to all who helped flood victims

Thank you to the first responders, emergency crews, volunteers and community members who worked tirelessly to keep people safe and cared for during the devastating flood of November 2021.

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Thank you to all the volunteers, businesses and families who came together and supported our community during the flood and through the recovery process.

The response efforts were truly remarkable. We are proud to be part of this community.

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STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER

# Red Cross relief still available for some flood-affected local businesses and organizations

## Flood recovery program offers \$5,000 for eligible applicants, with deadline Nov. 30

Jessica PETERS  
Abbotsford News

There is still help out there for Abbotsford's small businesses and not-for-profit organizations directly affected by last November's flooding.

Earlier this year, Red Cross extended their Support to Small Businesses and Not-for-Profits Program, which is designed to help with recovery after a disaster. The deadline to apply is now Nov. 30, and everyone is encouraged to apply, said Elysia Dempsey, the Canadian Red Cross senior director of emergency management program for BC and Yukon.

The program gives \$5,000 of financial assistance from the Canadian Red Cross, and eligibility is decided on by a number of factors. The details are all published on redcross.ca, under How We Help.

"I would hate to find out there was someone out there

who doesn't know about this," Dempsey said.

Applications are done online, along with the criteria and a list of frequently asked questions.

There are still many households, businesses and not-for-profits who are in varying degrees of recovery, Dempsey said. They are currently helping more than 200 households through the process of rebuilding their homes, lives and businesses.

For some, she said, it's a matter of helping as things pop up. For others, it's as if the floods happened yesterday. There are still people in temporary shelter who are very much in the same situation as they were immediately following the flood.

"Each household and each business is completely different," Dempsey said.

As the one-year mark passes, they are looking at



A man walks through the rising floodwaters crossing into Canada from the United States in Huntingdon Village in Abbotsford on Nov. 28, 2021. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Jonathan Hayward)

long-term recovery assistance more than the initial emergent needs of food, clothing and

shelter. But the needs are still there, Dempsey said.

While some people in the

Sumas Prairie had resources available when the flooding happened, others may have al-

ready been dealing with other issues.

"You will find some people who have pretty much rebuilt and moved on, and others who are still living in temporary housing," she said. "Some will have had their needs met right away, particularly those with insurance ... and there are others who might have a lot of trauma and shock, and it will look different and take a lot longer."

Red Cross response workers all have psychological first aid training, and support those affected by the disasters they attend.

If you need support with long-term flood recovery, reach out to the Canadian Red Cross by calling the call centre at 1-833-966-4225, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (PST) or by emailing BCSmallBizSupport@redcross.ca.

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STRONGER TOGETHER - THE FLOOD ONE YEAR LATER

# The flood, by the numbers

<p><b>\$2 billion</b> Estimated total damage to property and infrastructure in Abbotsford.</p> <p><b>540 mm</b> The rainfall accumulation for the month of November 2021, one-third of the average annual amount for Abbotsford.</p> <p><b>22,000</b> The total number of acres of land to be submerged on Sumas Prairie.</p> <p><b>600,000</b> The number of animals estimated to have perished on Sumas Prairie, including poultry, dairy cattle and hogs.</p> <p><b>1,100</b> The number of properties evacuated on Sumas Prairie.</p>	<p><b>3,300</b> The number of people evacuated from their homes.</p> <p><b>84</b> The number of damaged road sites in Abbotsford.</p> <p><b>21</b> The number of landslide sites.</p> <p><b>19</b> The number of damaged parks and trails.</p> <p><b>13</b> The number of damaged bridges.</p> <p><b>28</b> Number of days a local state of emergency was in effect.</p> <p><b>200</b> Number of people saved on Sumas Prairie by search and rescue.</p>	<p><b>17</b> Number of days Highway 1 was closed between Abbotsford and Hope.</p> <p><b>\$4.4 million</b> Amount raised by the Abbotsford Disaster Relief Fund from 6,100 individual donations.</p> <p><b>\$941,046</b> Total raised through BC Dairy Flood Recovery Fund and distributed to 65 B.C. dairy farms.</p> <p><b>10%</b> Estimate of total blueberry production directly impacted by the 2021 flooding.</p> <p><b>\$10 million</b> Amount paid out through Disaster Financial Assistance for 3,100 claims in the Fraser Valley to help people rebuild homes and businesses.</p>
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**BC Egg** continues to be thankful for the support shown to our farmers during the 2021 flooding. We thank everyone who helped evacuate farmers, animals and equipment; offered temporary housing; and provided warm clothes and food to those in need. We were overwhelmed by the support of the community and will never forget your generosity. We are proud to produce healthy, nutritious eggs for the people of BC.



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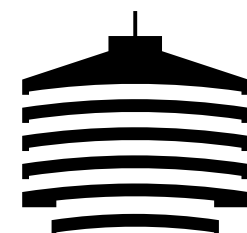
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# Benefits of walk-in tubs

As we age and begin to lose our mobility and sense of balance, bathing can not only become difficult but also a cause of additional stress and anxiety. Fear of falling and a fear of not being able to get out of the tub are two of the most common occurrences with many of our seniors today. Walk-in tubs have become extremely popular in the last decade and estimates show that people who go ahead and install a walk-in tub in their homes today, will be able to live independently for an additional five years.

Walk-in tubs are exactly what the name implies, tubs that have large doors that open, and you simply walk in and sit down on a 17-inch-high seat. You close and lock the door and the tub fills rapidly while you are sitting comfortably and safely inside. All the taps and controls are easily accessible at your fingertips. Once you are done your bath, turn the dial and the tub quickly drains and you simply open the door and walk out of the tub. The various models all have numerous grab bars and nonslip

surfaces making getting in and out worry free. Walk-in tubs are designed for an aging population who desire to remain independent for many years to come.

Manufacturers have optional tub designs accommodating every shape and size of person and bathroom. There is a tub size that will fit in the space where your existing tub or shower is. Walk-in tubs can be as basic as a soaker tub to as deluxe as your own personal spa. Offering numerous options such as heated back, multi-speed warm air jets, water jets, ozone, light therapy, aromatherapy, and more.

The benefits of a walk-in tub are numerous. Many people crave being able to confidently have a bath again and find relief by just soaking in a warm tub. Owners say they believe they sleep better after a soothing bath. The warm air or water jets give a deep massage and help to stimulate circulation, thus carrying additional healing oxygen throughout the body to the hands and feet. This has shown positive results increasing

“ Perhaps, one of the best decisions I’ve made is when I decided to go ahead and put a walk-in tub in my house. I no longer have a fear of falling and this will help me live in my home for many more years to come.”

Jean S.

mobility and helping to relieve the pain and symptoms of such conditions as arthritis, chronic back pain, fibromyalgia, diabetic and peripheral neuropathy, as well as various other acute and chronic conditions.

The Canadian Government website states that 1 in 4 seniors fall every year, and 25% of these falls are serious, leaving the victims permanently disabled and bedridden. A large percentage of these falls take place in the bathroom. Aside from all the pain and suffering it also ends up costing the Canadian medical system two billion dollars annually. Therefore, the British Columbia and Federal



Governments are helping many people who decide to purchase a walk-in tub now. The help comes in the forms of a tax credit, a Provincial Sales Tax waiver, and in certain qualifying cases a \$7,500.00 Government Grant.

As we all age and the years fly by, many seniors are faced with the reality that taking proactive

steps today and deciding to retrofit their homes with a walk-in tub is one of the best investments they can make to help them age in place, comfortably and independently in the home they love.

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