

Hon. Katrine Conroy
Minister of Finance
Room 153 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

September 25, 2023

Dear Minister Conroy,

RE: Urgent need for wildfire-affected business revenue relief fund

I am writing to convey my support for an urgent and critical initiative proposed by the Salmon Arm Chamber of Commerce — a dedicated fund to provide relief to local businesses adversely affected by the recent wildfires in the North Shuswap region this summer. It is my understanding that you have also been copied on an August 29, 2023, letter from Candace Hosseini, President of the Salmon Arm Chamber of Commerce, with the proposition.

The wildfires that swept through the Shuswap were nothing short of devastating, with officials recently confirming that more than [200 structures](#) had been lost to the Bush Creek East wildfire alone. Beyond the immediate threat to our natural landscape, these fires have had a profound and lasting impact on our local economy. A wide range of businesses, including those in the hospitality, retail, agriculture, and tourism sectors, have experienced significant hardships due to the physical damage, evacuation orders, road closures, and air quality concerns brought about by the fires.

As the letter from the Chamber notes, businesses have faced temporary closures, reduced foot traffic, supply chain disruptions, and a pervasive atmosphere of uncertainty, all of which have had a detrimental effect on their bottom line. We must recognize the economic toll this has taken on our community and the urgent need for assistance.

These newfound adversities are on top of the existing economic challenges that businesses in the Shuswap have faced for years, such as the soaring cost of business, the surge in vandalism and crime, as well as limited regional infrastructure upgrades. A strategic investment in our local businesses now will yield long-term benefits for both our economy and the social fabric of the Shuswap and, effectively, British Columbia.

I wholeheartedly support the urgent call made by the Salmon Arm Chamber of Commerce for the establishment of a dedicated Wildfire-Affected Business Revenue Relief Fund. Whether in the form of grants, low-interest loans, or a combination of both, this fund would ensure that businesses of all sizes and sectors receive the assistance they desperately need to navigate these challenging times and eventually rebuild.

I kindly request that you give careful consideration to this proposal and take immediate steps to expedite the creation of this program. I am more than willing to work closely with your team to develop



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a program tailored to the unique needs of the Shuswap's local businesses and ensure the transparent and efficient distribution of financial assistance.

The Shuswap community looks forward to a swift and compassionate response from your government to support the businesses that are the backbone of our region.

Sincerely,

Greg Kylo,
MLA for Shuswap

CC: MLA Brenda Bailey, Minister of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation
MLA Todd Stone, Official Opposition House Leader
MLA Peter Milobar, BC United Shadow Minister for Finance
Candace Hosseini, President, Salmon Arm Chamber of Commerce