



Services aux Autochtones
Canada

Indigenous Services
Canada

Sous-ministre

Deputy Minister

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0H4

April 25, 2024

John Williamson, P.C., M.P.
Chair
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
House of Commons
OTTAWA ON K1A 0A6

Dear John Williamson:

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is pleased to provide, in both official languages, two final reports and one progress report requested by April 30, 2024. These reports are pursuant to recommendations from the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts' *Report 34* titled, *Emergency Management in First Nations Communities*, tabled on November 27, 2023. The specific recommendations associated with this response relate to **the risk-based allocation of resources, the number of emergency coordinators required, and on Emergency Management Service Agreements.**

Report 34 is the result of a study that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts undertook on the Auditor General of Canada's November 2022 report titled, *Emergency Management in First Nations Communities*. The Auditor General's main finding was that "Indigenous Services Canada did not provide the support First Nations communities needed to manage emergencies such as floods and wildfires, which are happening more often and with greater intensity." The Auditor General's report contained seven recommendations to which ISC agreed and developed a Management Response Action Plan to address each recommendation.

Report 34 required a series of progress and final reports to be submitted between January 15, 2024, and April 30, 2028. ISC previously submitted one progress and two final reports on January 15, 2024, related to recommendations on **the risk-based allocation of resources, departmental and regional emergency management plans, and the quality of emergency management services.** On March 31, 2024, ISC also submitted a report on the recommendation related to **the implementation of result indicators.**

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Almost every recommendation in the aforementioned reports from this Committee and the Auditor General reference ISC working in collaboration with First Nations. As such, and in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations, a steering committee comprised of First Nations community members who have professional knowledge of emergency management was created with the intention of serving as an avenue for co-development between ISC and First Nations. This advisory body of 12 First Nation emergency management practitioners was stood up on October 12, 2023, and has been meeting about every two weeks. Members provide their feedback and guidance on the development and implementation of actions to address all of the Auditor General's recommendations to improve outcomes for First Nations communities.

We would like to highlight that for the recommendation related to **the backlog of structural mitigation projects**, in order to ensure the quality of ISC's financial figures and alignment to the official financial reporting cycle, we have requested an extension until July 15, 2024, from its original April 30, 2024, deadline. This request was included in our Government Response tabled in the House of Commons on March 22, 2024.

Recommendation 1 - On the risk-based allocation of resources

That, by 15 January 2024, Indigenous Services Canada present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining the progress made by the department, in collaboration with the First Nations, in identifying the risks related to emergencies and the costs of preventing and potentially responding to them. A final report should also be presented by 30 April 2024 explaining the new approach for allocating project funding based on this identification of needs and risks. The final report should also confirm that the new approach and funding measures have been implemented.

Response

Background

The 2022 Auditor General's report titled, "*Emergency Management in First Nations Communities*," found that ISC was not using a risk-based approach to ensure funding was being directed to First Nations communities that need it most. The audit report recommended that ISC should work with First Nations to implement a risk-based approach to inform program planning and decisions on where to invest in preparedness and mitigation activities to maximize support to communities at highest risk of being affected by emergencies.

ISC agreed with this recommendation, highlighting its commitment to work with First Nations to implement a risk-based approach to inform funding decisions.

ISC's enhanced risk-based approach is aligned to the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction's Priority 1 - *Understanding disaster risk which stipulates that disaster policies and practices should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions*. The approach also draws information from outreach to other government departments such as Public Safety Canada's National Risk Profile and Natural Resources Canada's National Risk Assessment Framework for Wildland Fire. It further leverages the Canadian Red Cross's Risk Reduction Resilience approach which recognizes the unique and multi-layered needs of priority populations, including Indigenous Peoples.

ISC's risk-based approach involves identifying, analyzing, and evaluating risks in First Nations communities where a comprehensive understanding is a key first step in reducing the probability and impact of emergencies defined as:

1. Probability - the determination of a risk occurring based on:

- Historical data on past events
- Historical data on the frequency of contributing events (e.g., weather conditions)
- Simulation models of sequences of events, protective system failures, and the associated consequences

2. Impact - measured as a calculation of the community's vulnerability weighed against their capacity to respond

A. Vulnerability is assessed based on the following considerations:

- Organizational
- Socio-Economic
- Environment
- Institutional

B. Capacity to respond is assessed based on the following considerations:

- Human
- Physical
- Infrastructure
- Financial

Another key dimension of assessing risk in the First Nations context is the concept of Indigenous knowledge and giving it equal value to scientific understanding. The Government of Canada defines it as, “a set of complex knowledge systems based on the worldviews of Indigenous Peoples and reflects their unique cultures, languages, values, histories, governance and legal systems. It is place-based, cumulative and dynamic. Indigenous knowledge systems involve living well with, and being in relationship with, the natural world a key consideration.”¹ The application of Indigenous knowledge in emergency management can be seen in activities such as prescribed burning to reduce wildfire impact, a practice which is becoming standard in an era of climate change.

ISC’s Emergency Management Preparedness and Mitigation Funding Streams

ISC has two **proposal-based** funding envelopes that support First Nations and other organizations.

1. Non-Structural Preparedness & Mitigation

ISC currently supports First Nations communities with funding annually, on a proposal basis, which prioritizes support to non-structural mitigation and emergency preparedness through small-scale projects to prevent or minimize a hazard. Activities supported include community emergency management plans, risk assessments and risk hazard mapping.

2. FireSmart

On a proposal basis, FireSmart currently provides funding annually to enhance skills in First Nations communities to prevent and prepare against wildland fires. Programming involves training First Nations teams in wildfire suppression duties, as well as fuel management and vegetation clearing, which reduces the intensity and spread of wildfires. FireSmart also leverages Indigenous knowledge of the local environment and terrain to improve emergency planning, preparation, and response to wildfires.

Update

ISC has developed and implemented, as of April 1, 2024, the three following measures to ensure that a more robust and comprehensive risk-based approach is being employed to maximize supports and existing funding streams to communities at highest risk of being affected by emergencies.

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¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/programs/aboriginal-consultation-federal-environmental-assessment/indigenous-knowledge-policy-framework-initiative.html>

1. Enhanced Risk Based Funding Formula

At the time of the Auditor General's audit, ISC's Emergency Management Mitigation and Preparedness funding envelopes, the Non-Structural Mitigation Program and the FireSmart program, allocated regional funding based on the formula in the following table.

Previous Risk²-Based Funding Formula

Criteria	Metric	Weighting
1. Cost of First Nation emergencies – Ten-year average	Provincial /Territorial% of Canadian total	50%
2. Population – Registered On-Reserve First Nations	Provincial /Territorial% of Canadian total	20%
3. Number of First Nation emergencies – Ten-year average	Provincial /Territorial% of Canadian total	10%
4. Remote First Nations – Zones three and four	Provincial /Territorial% of Canadian total	10%
5. Number of First Nation bands – On-reserve	Provincial /Territorial% of Canadian total	10%

As noted, by the Auditor General, this funding allocation approach did not contain forward-looking data, use any existing data sets that identify First Nations communities at the highest risk of not being able to manage emergencies, nor take into account First Nation's capacity to respond to emergency events.

To address these issues, ISC undertook a literature review of best practices in risk as well as outreach within the department and other federal government departments such as Natural Resources Canada, Public Safety Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to deepen its understanding of existing risk-based approaches. ISC also worked with the Steering Committee and reached out to First Nations partners to better ascertain their understanding of risk.

Following this literature review and outreach, these two data sets were selected as criteria to be used for the enhanced risk-based funding formula:

1. **The Climate Risk Index** – developed by the First Nation’s Adapt Program at Crown Indigenous-Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, identifies regions with relative higher risk for climate hazards such as wildfire and flooding. It assesses relative risk by First Nation community using hazard mapping data as well as past incidences data. The Climate Risk Index is intended to incorporate climate change as part of a suite of tools or criteria for program and policy decision-making and is currently used by other ISC programs (e.g., ISC’s Community Infrastructure Branch’s Fire Protection Program). The incorporation of this criteria into an updated formula responds directly to the Auditor General’s finding on leveraging existing data to identify First Nations communities at the highest risk.
2. **The Community Well-Being Index** - provides a systematic and reliable way to track the socio-economic well-being of communities in Canada over time. It illustrates gaps in well-being between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. It is one of many comprehensive ways to measure well-being in Canada. It has four key components: Education, Labour force activity, Income, and Housing. Its inclusion addresses the need to evaluate socio-economic vulnerability and the resiliency aspect of risk assessments in emergency management. It responds directly to the Auditor General’s finding on First Nation community capacity in managing an emergency event.

In addition to adding these two data sets, ISC also reduced the weighting of the Cost of Emergencies Category to 30% from its former 50% allocation which reduces a bias towards larger events and communities to better reflect a more comprehensive approach to risk assessment.

The Enhanced Risk Funding Formula is as follows (addition and/or changes are highlighted in green):

Criteria	Metric	Weighting
1. Regional Climate Risk Index Score NSMP – Fire/Flood ; FireSmart only Fire	Provincial/Territorial average score % of Canadian total	10%
2. Regional Community Well-Being Index Score	Provincial/Territorial average score % of Canadian total	10%
3. Cost of First Nation emergencies – Ten-year average	Provincial /Territorial % of Canadian total	30%
4. Population – Registered On-Reserve First Nations	Provincial /Territorial % of Canadian total	20%
5. Number of First Nation emergencies – Ten-year average	Provincial /Territorial % of Canadian total	10%
6. Remote First Nations – Zones three and four	Provincial /Territorial % of Canadian total	10%
7. Number of First Nation bands – On-reserve	Provincial /Territorial % of Canadian total	10%

2. Highest Risk Communities List

In addition to addressing the regional funding allocations of mitigation and preparedness funding, ISC has also developed a regional highest risk community list to ensure that First Nation communities most in need are identified and supported.

The methodology uses the following criteria and weighting to arrive at a score from zero to five, with five being the highest risk. Rating categories include historical, geographic, climate related, demographic, socio-economic, vulnerability and capacity criteria. All the criteria scoring is relative to a particular province or territory.

Highest Risk Communities List Criteria

Criteria	Weighting
Climate Risk Index (Average score Wildfire/Floods)	25%
Total # of emergencies over the past 5 years*	20%
On-reserve population	10%
Remoteness	15%
Community Well-Being	10%
Emergency Management Coordinator Funding	10%
Fire Capacity (Community Firehall, Firefighters, Training and Assets)**	5%
Mitigation Funding – Structural, Non-Structural and FireSmart	5%

*As reported to ISC, any event that impacts a First Nation based on the Emergency Management Assistance Program's Terms & Conditions definition of an event, which could result in an eligible response and recovery claim regardless of whether or not a State of Local Emergency (SOLE) has been declared.

** An evolving category aiming to best reflect the complex facets of First Nation community's fire capacity cognizant of the limitations therein.

Highest Risk Communities List – Hypothetical Example

As illustrated in the following table, scoring for each criterion is on a 0 to 5 scale and this is then applied as per the noted weighting percentages to produce a Final Risk Score out of 0 to 5.

Weighting	10%	20%	15%	12.5%	12.5%	10%	10%	5%	5%	
	EM Coordinators Funding	# of Emergencies	Remoteness	Climate Risk Index: Wildfire Average (2020/2050)	Climate Risk Index: Flood	CWB	Population on-reserve	Fire Capacity	Mitigation Funding	Final Score
Name										
Community A	0	3.33	5	4.0	5.0	3.51	3.28	-	-	3.22
Community B	0	3.33	5	4.0	1.0	4.36	0.12	5.00	5.00	2.99
Community C	0	2.22	2.5	4.0	5.0	2.97	5.00	-	-	2.74
Community D	0	5.00	2.5	4.0	3.0	4.05	1.20	-	-	2.78
Community E	0	3.33	1.25	4.0	2.0	3.92	4.05	-	2.50	2.53

3. Regional Proposal Risk Matrix

To further support and identify the highest risk communities in need, a regional proposal risk matrix tool has been developed and implemented which focuses on leveraging Indigenous knowledge. All proposals for preparedness and mitigation funding will have a risk assessment section based on ISC generated risk factors as well as a risk self-assessment component provided by the First Nation entity applying for funding. The combination of this risk information will provide a risk scoring which will be ranked on a heat map (see below for an example).

The results of this process will assist ISC regions in prioritizing proposals at medium to highest risk for funding. The methodology, leveraging standard risk principles, produces a final risk score (out of 5) based on the following:

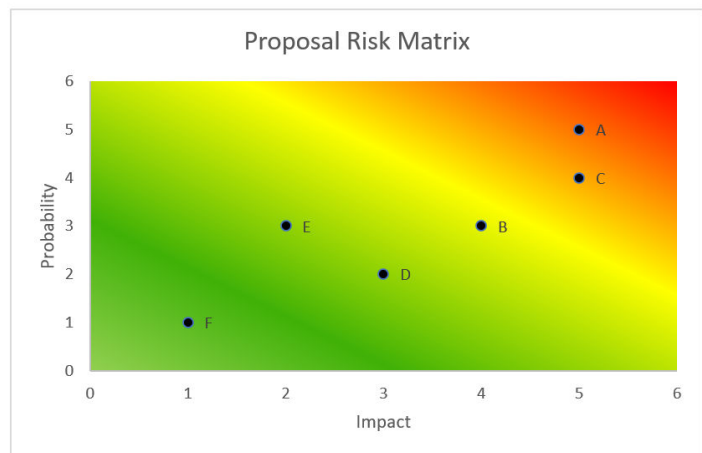
Risk Score = Probability X Impact

The Probability score will draw from the Climate Risk Index scoring and historical emergency events data. The Impact score is derived from the results of a self-assessment questionnaire, submitted by all First Nations applicants based upon their understanding of their context. The risk scores would be inserted into a table and risk scoring reflected in a heat map.

Regional Proposal Risk Matrix - Hypothetical Risk Scoring and Heat Map.

As illustrated in the below table, the right-hand table contains a Risk Score for each proposal based on the Probability score multiplied by the Impact score. The Risk Score is then represented on a heat map where green is lower risk moving upwards into the red areas representing higher risk.

First Nation Proposal	Probability	Impact	Risk Score
A	5	5	25
C	5	4	20
B	4	3	12
D	3	2	6
E	2	3	6
F	1	1	1



Risk Indicators

To track progress in assuring that funding is being allocated to the First Nation's proposals at highest risk, ISC has developed a new performance measurement indicator, to be reviewed annually, as part of the departmental reporting processes:

Percentage of Non-Structural Mitigation and Preparedness proposals allocated to medium/high risk communities/organizations - 50%

The enhanced funding allocation and the two risk tools will bolster ISC's risk informed approach within its emergency management programming. The enhanced formula will ensure regions receive allocations reflective of their risk context while the tools will complement and formalize existing processes in identifying First Nation communities at highest risk and taking steps, such as direct outreach and strategic resource allocations as well as proposal ranking and decision-making, to support First Nation needs.

As recommended by the Auditor General, ISC worked closely with First Nations in enhancing existing tools and developing new tools to bolster its risk-based approach. Emergency management expertise was leveraged, especially through the ISC and Assembly of First Nations' steering committee, so that the risk-based approach and its applications better meet First Nation needs.

ISC confirms that its revised risk-based approach has been implemented as of April 1, 2024. The Enhanced Risk Funding Formula was used to determine fiscal year 2024-2025 regional funding allocation for its Non-Structural Mitigation and Preparedness and FireSmart funding envelopes. The Highest Risk Communities list and the Regional Proposal Risk Matrix have been adopted by the ISC regions to support their funding allocation approach. For example, in preparation for the anticipated record-breaking wildfire season, in April 2024, ISC regions undertook a First Nation outreach initiative, informed by the Highest Risk Communities list, to assist in supporting communities most at need.

Recommendation 4 - On the number of emergency coordinators required
That, by 30 April 2024, Indigenous Services Canada present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report on the changes to the number of emergency management coordinators and the reasons for these changes.

Response

Background

The Auditor General found that while ISC had provided a total of \$26.9 million to First Nations communities and organizations between the 2019-20 and 2021-22 fiscal years for approximately 190 full-time or part-time emergency management coordinators, the department did not identify how many additional emergency management coordinators were needed by First Nations. The Auditor General recommended, using the above-mentioned revised risk-based approach (*Recommendation 1 - On the risk-based allocation of resources*), that ISC should determine how many additional emergency management coordinator positions are needed and allocate new funding for these positions based on risk.

ISC agreed with this recommendation and the department explored options and opportunities to support more positions to support First Nations communities, using the revised risk-based approach. Following the release of the Auditor General's report, ISC engaged with First Nations and the steering committee about how Emergency Management Coordinator positions are being utilized, how ISC can better support existing Emergency Management Coordinators, and how to assess the remaining need for these positions. In response to the Auditor General's recommendation, ISC recognizes that First Nations communities at high-risk of emergency events should be able to employ or have access to an Emergency Management Coordinator.

ISC's Emergency Management Assistance Program's Capacity Enhancement funding was introduced in Budget 2019 and now provides \$12.96 million per year in ongoing funding. When introduced, funding for Emergency Management Coordinator positions was allocated on a regional basis according to the Emergency Management Assistance Program's risk-based funding formula (referenced above in Recommendation 1 - On the risk-based allocation of resources). This formula allocated funding among ISC regions based on factors such as the First Nations population, number of communities, the cost of past emergency events, and the frequency of past events.

To account for specific context of each region, the delivery of this funding has varied from region to region. Since there are more First Nations communities than there are funded positions, a number of strategies evolved to create the maximum possible benefit for the greatest number of communities according to the specific contexts of each region. For example, in regions such as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, funding for Emergency Management Coordinator positions was shared among each community in the region equitably, creating multiple part-time positions out of the original notional full-time Emergency Management Coordinator position distribution. In

other cases, Emergency Management Coordinator positions are hosted in Tribal Councils or similar organizations which then provide their services to each of the Tribal Council's member communities. In British Columbia, where there is a higher number of First Nations communities, but the population of those communities is generally lower, hosting Emergency Management Coordinator positions in Tribal Councils ensures that as many communities as possible have access to an Emergency Management Coordinator. In all regions, funding an Emergency Management Coordinator position is done in partnership with First Nations in order to meet their needs; ISC does not play a role in hiring, evaluating, or otherwise managing the Emergency Management Coordinator positions.

Since the release of the Auditor General's report, ISC has been working with its regional offices, First Nations partners, and existing Emergency Management Coordinators to better understand their current and evolving needs as well as identifying the unique risks First Nations communities can experience.

Update

In fiscal year 2023-24, after the release of the Auditor General's report, the base amount of Capacity Enhancement funding available to ISC's Emergency Management Assistance Program on an annual basis increased to its current and ongoing amount of \$12.96 million. This, along with partnering with other existing ISC programs to pool funding, has enabled ISC to increase the number of full and part-time Emergency Management Coordinator positions supported across Canada to 248, as of 1 April 2024, up from 190 as noted in the Auditor General's report.

In considering any changes to this funding envelope's allocation, ISC recognizes that those First Nations communities and Tribal Councils currently receiving Capacity Enhancement funding have made long-term human resources plans and are conducting emergency management related projects that take time and efforts to complete. Consequently, to fulfill existing funding commitments to First Nations, ISC has not made significant changes to the distribution of capacity enhancement funding to each region. ISC will instead take a phased approach to re-allocate a portion of existing funding to communities at highest risk not currently supported. Should new funding become available to support more Emergency Management Coordinator positions, ISC will prioritize that funding for the most at-risk communities according to the approach developed in response to the Auditor General's recommendation on a *Risk-Based Approach*

ISC has explored various options to increase the number of Emergency Management Coordinators using existing departmental funding. For example, in Alberta, working closely with First Nations, starting in fiscal year 2024-25, ISC has launched a new proof-of-concept three-year project supporting 48 new dedicated Emergency Management Coordinators in the Province's 48 First Nations communities, up from seven in fiscal year 2023-24. To achieve this increase, the project pools funding from other ISC programs, namely its First Nations and Inuit Health Branch's funding for Health Emergency Management Coordinators and the Community Infrastructure Branch's Structural Fire Protection Officer program. This project was built on requests from Alberta First Nations for broader supports and learning from ISC's Atlantic region which has combined Emergency Management Assistance Program and First Nations and Inuit Health Branch capacity funding since 2020 to support Emergency Management Coordinator positions.

To properly plan for allocating future Emergency Management Coordinator positions, should the department secure new funding, ISC has cross referenced the distribution of currently supported Emergency Management Coordinators positions using the Highest Risk Communities list tool developed while addressing *Recommendation 1 - On the risk-based allocation of resources*. Results indicate that of the communities of highest risk in each region (176 communities in total nationally), 31% have a dedicated Emergency Management Coordinator, another 41% have access to an Emergency Management Coordinator (usually through a Tribal Council), and currently 28% lack direct access to an Emergency Management Coordinator.

Going forward, ISC will also continue to undertake similar initiatives, like the previously mentioned Health Emergency Management Coordinators program and the Structural Fire Protection Officer program to pool funding in cases where appropriate.

Emergency Management Coordinators are a valuable tool in ensuring First Nations communities can build their capacity to manage emergency events, and a critical link to coordinating the additional resources they need when an emergency impacts the community.

Recommendation 5: On Emergency Management Service Agreements

That, Indigenous Services Canada must provide the Committee with reports on multilateral emergency management service agreements with First Nations and the provinces and territories, on wildfire agreements, and on the development of evacuation service standards by 30 April of each year from 2024 to 2027. Furthermore, the Committee strongly encourages ISC to develop service standards by April 2025, rather than the timeline set out in its action plan (April 2027).

Response

Background

Emergencies are happening more often and with greater severity across Canada. The impact of these emergencies is especially felt by First Nations communities, and the clear definition of roles, responsibilities, and service provisions in emergency situations allows communities to better respond to and recover from emergencies.

The Auditor General found that ISC did not have service agreements or wildfire agreements across all jurisdictions with provinces, territories, or other service providers to provide First Nations communities with emergency services, and that there was a lack of mutually agreed upon evacuation service standards in all jurisdictions except Ontario.

ISC agreed with this recommendation and acknowledges that the lack of service agreements across all jurisdictions increases the risk that First Nations will not receive emergency services when they are needed. ISC further agrees with the Auditor General's recommendations that comprehensive emergency management service agreements which include mutually agreed-upon service standards, and increased supports for First Nations-led approaches to emergency management be established in all jurisdictions. It also agreed with the Committee's request to provide an update on wildfire agreements, and the development of evacuation service standards in progress reports provided by April 30, 2025, that will include service standards followed by progress reports on April 30, 2026, and April 30, 2027.

Currently, Canada has eight bilateral emergency management service agreements with provincial and territorial governments and non-governmental organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross. These agreements were put in place to provide support to First Nations during emergency events comparable to those within the same jurisdiction. In provinces and territories where there is no agreement in place, ISC works with the provincial or territorial government, First Nations, tribal councils, and third-party organizations to deliver emergency services and supports for on-reserve and eligible First Nation communities. ISC provides funding to these governments and partners for emergency services and supports through the Emergency Management Assistance Program.

In recognition of Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination ISC is co-developing multilateral agreements across all provincial and territorial jurisdictions. These agreements will include First Nations as equal partners and will reflect their vision and

aspirations according to their individual context. Region-specific approaches based on the direction and priorities of First Nations are being taken to promote the uptake of new multilateral agreements, based on direct engagement with First Nations. While new multilateral service agreements are being developed, existing bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding currently in place between the Government of Canada, provincial and territorial governments, and other service delivery partners continue to be in effect.

Updates

In January 2023, the Emergency Management Directorate of ISC created a new dedicated team to advance the development of multilateral emergency management agreements across Canada. Through this capacity, ISC has undertaken region-specific approaches to engage First Nations interested in strengthening their emergency management systems and capabilities. This includes providing funding to support First Nations and Tribal Councils to engage with their members on their vision for emergency management and develop First Nations-led emergency management models that set the stage for multilateral discussions and the eventual advancement and implementation of multilateral agreements.

In the spirit of ensuring that the agreements put in place are truly First Nations-led, the pace of discussions and negotiations are being set by First Nations partners. In a number of regions engagement sessions with ISC, First Nations partners, emergency management service providers, and provincial and territorial governments have been held. However, the pace of development differs between regions depending on the interest and capacity of First Nations partners. While some areas are currently undergoing preliminary negotiations towards the eventual establishment of multilateral agreements, other areas are still in the pre-engagement process. A brief overview of regional progress is as follows.

- **Alberta:** Pre-engagement with Treaty-area organizations on the development of multilateral agreements is currently underway. A multilateral roundtable with representatives from ISC, provincial emergency management agencies, and First Nations partners is set to be convened in Fall 2024, following up on the roundtable meeting convened in early 2023. After consultation with First Nations, a three-year pilot project supporting an all-hazard emergency management coordinator position in all 48 First Nations in the province is set to begin Fiscal Year 2024/25 to support emergency management capacity development and multilateral conversations directly in community.

- **British Columbia:** ISC continues to meet regularly with the Emergency Management Multilateral Working Group including the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and the Province of British Columbia, represented by Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and BC Wildfire Services, to scope multilateral negotiations. Based on the mandates from the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, formal negotiations on the establishment of a multilateral agreement began on April 11, 2024.
- **Manitoba:** ISC is working to establish a multilateral partnership table with First Nation partners, the Province of Manitoba, and other service providers. The most recent meeting occurred in March 2024 where there was agreement to put forward a proposal for leadership to consider approving a formal governance structure that will serve as the basis for multilateral discussions.
- **New Brunswick:** A multilateral table has been convened with Tribal Councils and the Province of New Brunswick, and all partners are working collaboratively to draft a terms of reference and multilateral agreement document. The multilateral table convened in December 2023 and February 2024, will continue to meet on a regular basis to advance joint priorities.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador:** ISC has conducted outreach with First Nations and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Further outreach and engagement with First Nations representatives is planned for spring 2024.
- **Northwest Territories:** Discussions to explore avenues for engagement toward a multilateral agreement or renewed emergency management paradigm in the north is underway. The Minister of Northern Affairs will work with the Ministers of Indigenous Services, Crown-Indigenous Relations, Emergency Preparedness, Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, the Government of Northwest Territories and indigenous partners to create a long-term strategy to address culturally appropriate emergency management services in the north.
- **Nova Scotia:** In November 2023, ISC approved a proposal that will enhance First Nation capacity to participate in multilateral discussions in Nova Scotia, which includes funding eight additional Emergency Management Coordinators in community. ISC continues to engage with First Nation representatives and has co-developed two working groups to advance discussions towards a multilateral agreement in Nova Scotia. ISC will continue to meet with the working groups and will conduct further outreach with the Province of Nova Scotia to discuss multilateral agreements in spring 2024.

- **Ontario:** ISC and the Government of Ontario conducted pre-engagement with First Nations leadership and Indigenous Representative Organizations from September 2023 to February 2024 on developing a multilateral agreement. In March 2024, a multilateral roundtable was convened for the development of a governance structure of a multilateral agreement. A working group to advance the priorities shared at the roundtable will be convened in spring 2024. ISC is working closely with the Government of Ontario to listen and respond to First Nations' priorities and tie multilateral progress to a more coordinated response for the 2024 cyclical emergency season.
- **Prince Edward Island:** Early engagement with First Nations representatives and the Government of Prince Edward Island have signalled interest in advancing multilateral agreements. Multilateral meetings with all interested parties are expected to occur in spring 2024.
- **Quebec:** Initial conversations on multilateral agreements have begun, resulting in First Nations-led proposals that work towards service transfer from ISC to First Nations.
- **Saskatchewan:** In early 2023, ISC provided funding to five Tribal Councils to conduct engagement with their members to develop First Nations-led emergency management models. In February 2024, ISC convened a meeting with the Tribal Councils to hear updates on their work to date. Follow up meetings scheduled in Spring 2024 with inclusion of the Province of Saskatchewan are already in place. ISC also met with other Tribal Councils and Independent First Nations in January 2024 to expand engagement on developing their own Emergency Management models and participate in the development of multilateral agreements.
- **Yukon:** Preliminary engagement began in February 2024 at the Yukon First Nations Emergency Management Forum. In addition, the Minister of Northern Affairs will work with the Ministers of Indigenous Services, Crown-Indigenous Relations, Emergency Preparedness, Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, the Government of Northwest Territories and Indigenous partners to create a long-term strategy to address culturally appropriate emergency management services in the North.

Discussions about the renewal or development of wildfire agreements in all jurisdictions and the development of mutually agreed upon service standards is ongoing. ISC is undertaking a review of the current wildfire agreements in place across the country to identify gaps in service and coverage. This includes engaging with provincial and territorial governments and First Nations as part of multilateral agreement discussions with the potential of including wildfire agreements within multilateral agreements where possible.

The First Nations steering committee has also been engaged on the action plan for mutually agreed upon service standards and has provided feedback which is being integrated. Work on the development of interim service standards is continuing with recent progress including the development of guidance documents for the use of service providers and First Nations partners. These interim service standards are designed to support provincial and territorial governments and service providers in improving services to be more culturally appropriate and to better address the needs of marginalized people until service standards are developed or put in place by First Nations. These interim standards may also be integrated into service agreements under development. Further reports on the status of establishing comprehensive emergency management service agreements and service standards will be provided by April 30 of 2025, 2026 and 2027.

The above responses underscore the Government of Canada's commitment to ensuring First Nations communities can thrive and be resilient. The Department is committed to providing the remaining reports requested in the Committee's report.

Should the Committee have any further inquiries, please contact Irene Balite, Senior Director, Legislative, Parliamentary and Regulatory Affairs Directorate, Indigenous Services Canada, irene.balite2@sac-isc.gc.ca; 343-998-2373.

Sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Gina Wilson', written in a cursive style.

Gina Wilson