



MEDIA RELEASE

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Does Kelowna Need to Start Planning for Business Recovery from Floods and Fires Now?

Kelowna: The memories of Summer 2017 are still fresh as the snow packs of 2018 – now at 152% – begin to melt. While emergency planning services are gearing up and readying for the potential of rising waters, are businesses also examining their recovery plans? Many businesses locally remember the fires of 2003, and definitely, the smoke of 2017. Business recovery should be – but often isn't – high on any business's strategic plan for survival.

On April 25, the Kelowna Chamber is tackling the subject of Business Recovery in the face of natural disasters. They have invited a panel of three speakers to help business people address the subject of planning for a disaster – a task some business people seem to find about as attractive as updating their wills. The three speakers include:

Scott Crockatt, Director of Marketing & Communications, Calgary Chamber of Commerce. Scott worked alongside Calgary businesses in 2013, helping them dig out of the worst natural disaster in Calgary history. Predicted closures of flood-affected companies were 43%. The Chamber's efforts kept that number from a predicted 43 per cent to just one per cent — all while supporting the growth of Calgary as a diverse and welcoming place. The Calgary Chamber won an international award for their work, and their unprecedented success.

Ron Mattiussi, former City Manager, City of Kelowna. Ron was City Manager in Kelowna from 2006 to the end of March 2018, when he "retired". In the 2003 Kelowna Wildfire, Ron directed the Regional Emergency Operations Centre: he was the man in charge of the City's response to the Okanagan Mountain Park Fire. While ensuring the firefighters were supported and equipped and citizens were cared for, the EOC team managed to safely evacuate over thirty thousand people in one night. It was not the largest evacuation in Canadian history but it may have been the fastest. Ron's next career will focus on advising communities and in particular CAOs on regional approaches to Emergency Management and Crisis Leadership.

Leann Hackman-Carty, President, HACKMANCARTY & Associates. Leann has dealt with flood-impacted communities in Alberta. In 2016/17 she worked with Fort McMurray on economic recovery efforts. She just released *Master Your Disaster*: a series of readiness, response and recovery guides for families, business and communities. Leann has served as Chief Executive Officer for Economic Developers Alberta (EDA) since 2009. EDA are involved in economic development activities including business retention & expansion.

For more information:
www.kelownachamber.org/events

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BACKGROUNDER

In Calgary after the 2013 flood, there were 1,500 applications from small businesses for assistance.

In Kelowna, flood relief work in 2018 is now budgeted by the Regional District of the Central Okanagan at \$2 million. Tourism in 2017 was impacted by the floods – and hotel numbers, and hence, downstream tourist spending – were down. Kelowna's overall growth numbers meant tourism and hotel occupancy, while down from 2016, didn't take as big a hit as projected. But: plan for the worst, and survive.

The Yukon Chamber has stats showing 20% of businesses experience a failure (fire, flood, natural disaster, etc.) in any given year – and of those, 80% will go under within a year. More facts:

- 90% of organizations without a continuity plan fail after a year.
- In Fort McMurray, since the fires, 40% of the businesses have not reopened.
- Recovery efforts can eat up 25% of staff time for weeks and months after a disaster.

More on the Calgary floods: to date more than \$71.5 million has been paid out in mitigation costs to businesses and homeowners. Estimated costs of the flood – the second worst disaster to date in Canadian history – is \$6 billion. (Fort McMurray moved into top spot in 2016 at insured damage of \$3.6 billion; 90,000 residents evacuated, and 2,400 buildings destroyed.)

In August 2017, the Plateau fire which covered over 500,000 hectares of land just northwest of Williams Lake. It was the largest fire ever recorded in BC history, forcing 24,000 from the city and surrounding area to flee to safety. The number is comparable to the 30,000 evacuated in Kelowna in 2003 – in one night.

In Williams Lake, the recovery efforts continue; many businesses have not re-opened. Wildfire recovery managers are in place in Williams Lake and Quesnel. Provincial funding – \$72 million over three years – is available, but there is no accepted strategy yet on how to spend the funds.

“It has affected everybody differently,” Mayor Walt Cobb of Williams Lake, said. “[The funding] is there to help small businesses along the way between here and Prince George. Whether it's a relief in taxes or what, we don't know.”

Cobb and affected businesses are waiting for the April 30 publication date of the BC provincial independent review, commissioned by the government last December, headed by George Abbot and Maureen Chapman. This report will be used to guide the province's approach to this year's flooding and wildfire seasons, and the goal is to learn from the experiences of 2017 to improve the government's systems, processes and procedures, according to the Forests Ministry.

While the federal government also promised funding after the fires, that money has not yet appeared.

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