



REQUEST FOR DECISION

File # 8100-20, 1715-02, 1850-20

Report To: Mayor and Council
From: Director of Community Services
Presenter: Vanessa Harris
Subject: Administration Report No. 0035/24
Canada Day Event Changes and Fireworks Budget Reallocation
Meeting: Regular Council
Meeting Date: 11 Mar 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

"THAT, Council approve the cancellation of all future Canada Day Fireworks, as presented in Administration Report 0035/24 Canada Day Event Changes and Fireworks Budget Reallocation,

AND THAT, Council approve the reallocation of 2024 Canada Day Fireworks funds to cover both micro-grants for free community events on Canada Day, as well as an enhanced fireworks show on New Years' Eve of the same year."

CAO'S COMMENTS:

Increasingly dry summers have made it difficult to provide reliable and safe fireworks shows during the summer. Drought conditions have caused late cancelations to our Canada Day Fireworks and these come at significant cost both financially and in terms of impact to the Canada Day Celebrations. Enhancing the New Years Eve fireworks show, and providing micro grants to community organizations for Canada Day is a better allocation of resources and a response to changing safety considerations.

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATION:

"THAT, Council receives Administration Report No. 0035/24 - Canada Day Event Changes and Fireworks Budget Reallocation for information."

KEY ISSUES(S)/ CONCEPTS DEFINED:

In 2023, British Columbia experienced a total of 2,245 wildfires, burning almost 3-million hectares of land. Risk of wildfire increases each season, with the peak season being May through September. Provincial fire restrictions have affected Canada Day Fireworks shows in recent years, causing late-notice cancellation of fireworks events in Fort St. John.

RELEVANT POLICY:

Resolution No. 0061/21

"THAT, Council receive Administration Report 61/21 - Community Fireworks, AND THAT, Council direct staff to plan and implement two annual community fireworks displays, on July 1 and December 31, beginning in 2022, AND FURTHER THAT, the cost to host two community fireworks displays be included in the budget from 2022 onward."

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PILLARS:

Vibrant Community – Invest in community safety, social, cultural, and recreational programs.

Relationships & Advocacy – Initiate and foster relationships and advocate to decision makers on the issues that impact our community and our neighbours.

Economic Development – Enhance community economic development to provide opportunities and sustainability for Fort St. John.

Organizational Excellence – Provide a healthy workplace that is inclusive and builds on our diversity, engagement, and sense of community.

Managing Assets – Build and manage assets that support the current and future needs of the community.

COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Key Values

- | Safety

- | Integrity
- | Respect
- | Innovation
- | Responsiveness

Strategic Objectives

- | Provide and support robust, affordable, and accessible wellness and recreation opportunities for the whole community
- | Foster community pride and a sense of belonging
- | Provide an environment where the safety, health, and wellness of our employees is prioritized
- | Embrace environmental responsibility through sustainable and effective practices
- | Ensure accountable, transparent, and responsible financial management focused on value

GENERAL:

In 2023, British Columbia experienced a total of 2,245 wildfires, burning almost 3-million hectares of land. Risk of wildfire increases each season, with the peak season being May through September. Provincial fire restrictions have affected Canada Day Fireworks shows in recent years, causing late-notice cancellation of fireworks events in Fort St. John.

Communities such as Prince George, Vancouver, and Cultus Lake have taken the lead in canceling Canada Day fireworks shows due to rising costs and risk of wildfires across the Province of British Columbia. In addition, fireworks cause extensive air pollution in a short amount of time, leaving metal particles, dangerous toxins, harmful chemicals, and smoke in the air for days. Short term exposures can cause damage to lungs, as well as physical damage to the hearing organs of animals.

ORGANIZATIONAL:

The Event

Canada Day in Fort St. John is a large-scale corporate event run by the City of Fort St. John meant for safe and fun celebration of our community and it's diverse citizens. The event has historically included a parade through the City, park activities, performances at Centennial Park, and then a late-night fireworks show. Activities on Canada Day run from approximately 9am to 11pm.

Safety Implications

Safety implications and associated costs for these events increase every year. These increases include the cost of traffic control contractors for both the parade and fireworks, as well as the volume of staff required to supervise and implement the parade, park activities and fireworks. Safety implications of summer fireworks includes the risk of wildfire. At present, the Fire Department deploys a crew to monitor the site and ensure there has been no fire started. However, the risk of fire persists with dry weather and the chance of live shells being missed during the initial cleanup period immediately following the event.

Due to these safety implications, the City is not permitted to host fireworks during Category 2 and 3 fire

restrictions set by the Province of British Columbia, which have been in affect during two (2) out of the past three (3) Canada Day shows. Last minute event cancellations mean inefficient use of personnel resources and budget for planning a show that may not go ahead, it can result in confusion due to changes in communications and marketing plans, and in unmet expectation from the citizens of Fort St. John.

Staffing

Event staff who supervise and facilitate the events typically consist of Recreation, Arts and Culture, Parks, Facilities, Public Works, and Public Safety personnel. Meeting the staffing levels needed for each component of the Canada Day events has become a barrier.

Some increases seen in the past 3-years have included:

- | The number of individuals required to supervise the parade route and pedestrians at a given time before, during, and after the parade.
- | The number of individuals required to cover schedules throughout the entirety of the day, while meeting Collective Agreement and Provincial Employment Standards.
- | The number of employees who cannot attend work due to last minute illnesses, impacting services or a reducing staffing levels in some areas.
- | The number of employees who turn down stat holiday over-time. We have seen a trend for employees to increasingly prioritize personal time away from work, resulting in fewer people available for stat holiday over-time.

FINANCIAL:

It is proposed that the budgeted amount, of \$25,000 allocated to the Canada Day Fireworks in 2024 be reallocated to provide micro-grants for free community events on Canada Day, as well as to cover an enhanced fireworks show on New Years' Eve of the same year.

	Proposed Budget
Micro-Grants for Free Community Events	Up to \$10,000
Reallocation to New Years' Even Fireworks	\$15,000
Total	\$25,000

Micro-Grants for Free Community Events

In 2023, nine (9) organizations applied for micro-grants of up to \$1000.00 per organization to cover the expenses of an approved activity plan. A total of \$5, 550.00 was awarded to six (6) organizations in order to provide events such as free crossfit classes with Crossfit Exhale, free escape rooms with Amazing Escapes Ltd., seniors activities from the Fort St. John & Area Senior's Care Foundation, and free food and beverages from Subway and Eateteria. Micro-grants for community events are a cost effective way to encourage more activities throughout the City of Fort St. John without exceeding the staffing capacity of municipal employees.

New Years' Eve Enhanced Fireworks Show

In 2023, \$10,000 of the Canada Day Fireworks budget was reallocated to the following New Years' Fireworks. The enhanced show lasted approximate twenty five (25) minutes, increasing in quantity, size and duration of the show compared to previous displays. In addition, due to the early winter sunset, staff were able to work through the entirety of the event without scheduling barriers. This reduced the total number of people needed to implement the event. The earlier show on New Years' Eve in 2023 received positive comments and feedback from the community, expressing that it was more accessible to families

with young children who go to bed before the 10pm showtime at Canada Day.

FOLLOW UP ACTION:

Staff will work with the fireworks contractor to make proposed adjustments based on the changes approved by Council, and ensure the total value of the contract is not affected.

Staff will modify the Canada Day communications and marketing plan to include the changes approved by Council.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:

Feedback received from Canada Day 2023 micro-grants for free community events

Feedback received from 2023 New Years' enhanced fireworks show

COMMUNICATION:

DEPARTMENTS CONSULTED ON THIS REPORT:

Consultation conducted with:

- | Recreation
- | Arts & Culture
- | Facilities
- | Parks
- | Bylaw
- | Fire Department

Fort St. John Fire Department Consultation Statement:

The use of pyrotechnics carries an inherent risk to the community, especially during summer. The East Bypass/Water Tower site located on the North East quadrant of the city is classified as a low fuel threat, primarily made up of willow, alder and grasslands. As identified in the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan completed in 2023, the prevailing winds during this time of year are primarily West/South West. Due to the fact that the area is northeast of the city, the risk to infrastructure is low. With that in mind, a wildfire that would occur in that area would be difficult to action and confine due to the significant resource restrictions that the fire department experiences during the summer, specifically on the Canada Day long weekend.

The Fort St. John Fire Prevention Bylaw restricts the use of all fireworks within the City of Fort St. John unless otherwise authorized by the Fire Chief for civic activities. With the recent fire danger rating necessitating the cancellation of the fireworks show, continuing forward with the event may inadvertently send the wrong message to the community. We frequently see/hear about the illegal use of fireworks

during this time. Clear formal communication restricting the use, including support from the City, may reduce the overall occurrences.

With the continued uncertainty surrounding the danger rating in our region, and the most recent example of 2023's wildfire season, it would be prudent to consider reallocating the funds that were established for the fireworks into other Canada Day events that hold less of a liability risk to the city.

Attachments:

Province of BC 2023 Wildfire Season Summary

Example Media Release for Canada Day Micro Grants

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Vanessa Harris, Recreation Manager

Wildfire Season Summary

★ Last updated on December 7, 2023

The 2023 wildfire season has been the most destructive in British Columbia's recorded history:

- More than 2.84 million hectares of forest and land burned
- Tens of thousands of people forced to evacuate
- Hundreds of homes and structures lost or damaged
- Impacts to cultural values, ecological values, infrastructure and local economies
- Indirect economic impacts to agriculture, tourism and other weather-dependent businesses
- Unquantifiable impacts to people's health and wellbeing

This season has been emotionally challenging and will always be remembered for the tragic loss of six members of B.C.'s wildland firefighting community. These individuals exhibited remarkable courage, dedication and selflessness, and their memory will continue to be honoured. Thank you, Devyn Gale, Zak Muise, Kenneth Patrick, Jaxon Billyboy, Blain Sonnenberg and Damian Dyson for serving and protecting the lands and people of British Columbia.

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We're pleased to share the following video summary of the 2023 wildfire season through the eyes of our people.

2023 BC Wildfire Service Season Summary

2023 BC Wildfire Service Season Summary





This video acknowledges the conditions and impacts of the 2023 wildfire season. It also honours personnel and partners while paying tribute to the fallen wildland firefighters.

Provincial Statistics

Between April 1 and October 31, 2,245 wildfires burned more than 2.84 million hectares of forest and land. This is the most hectares burned in a wildfire season in B.C.'s recorded history.

Though the number of wildfires and hectares burned are significant, 80 per cent of wildfires this season were contained at five hectares or less.

Other years saw more total fires. Twelve seasons have had over 3,000 fires from April 1 to October 31, with 1970 holding the record with 3,990 fires.

Hectares burned this year are double the last record of 1.35 million in 2018. This amount is 10 times the 20-year average annual area burned (284,001 hectares) and is what would historically be expected over a decade. The table below compares 2023 to other significant wildfire seasons (from April 1-October 31).

Provincial Wildfire Statistics, 2017-2023

Year	Number of Wildfires	Hectares Burned
2023	2,245	2,840,545

Year	Number of Wildfires	Hectares Burned
2018	2,080	1,355,271
2017	1,332	1,215,685

Of the 2,245 wildfires, 72 per cent were natural-caused and 25 per cent were human-caused. For the remaining three per cent of wildfires, the causes are undetermined.

The number of lightning strikes during the 2023 wildfire season was slightly above the 20-year average, with 265,321 strikes recorded.

There were 60 wildfires designated as Wildfires of Note. A Wildfire of Note is a wildfire that is highly visible or poses a threat to public safety.

The estimated cost of wildfire suppression is \$817 million. The total cost will be finalized after the season ends on March 31, 2024. This amount does not account for future cost recoveries.

For 28 days, B.C. was under a provincial state of emergency.

Wildfires this season resulted in:

- An estimated 208 evacuation orders which affected approximately 24,000 properties and roughly 48,000 people
- An estimated 386 evacuation alerts which affected approximately 62,000 properties and roughly 137,000 people

The number of structures impacted is not yet available, as communities are still assessing and gathering the information to share with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness.

Between April 1 and September 30, 29,900 calls were made to the Provincial Wildfire Reporting Centre, generating 18,200 wildfire reports. More than 1,800 wildfire reports were made via the 'Report a Fire' function in the BC Wildfire Service mobile app.

Conditions and Fire Behaviour

British Columbia experienced one of the warmest and driest Octobers in 2022. Daytime highs were consistently four to 10 degrees above normal and there was very limited precipitation for what is typically a cool and wet month. Due to the limited moisture, drought conditions in the forests were much higher than normal. The elevated drought codes carried over into spring 2023 and set the stage for a potentially active fire season.

Valley bottoms and deeper fuel layers continued to be very dry from the fall and into April as there was little to no precipitation received, making forest fuels easily susceptible to ignition. Unusually advanced fire behaviour was observed as a result of the drought conditions, considering how early in the spring it was.



In May, an early season heatwave delivered temperatures six to 10 degrees above normal. Rainfall amounts were considerably lower than historical norms, with some areas receiving half of their average amount of precipitation. Nineteen of 23 Environment Canada weather stations recorded a drier than normal May. Sixteen of 23 Environment Canada weather stations recorded the warmest May on record. The exceptional summer-like conditions accelerated snow melt and the drying of fuels, making high-elevation areas snow-free and therefore receptive to lightning two to four weeks earlier than normal.

The lightning-caused Donnie Creek wildfire (G80280) was discovered on May 12, 136 kilometres southeast of Fort Nelson. It exhibited aggressive fire growth, taking a 30 kilometre run just five days after receiving 40 millimetres of rain. Early season burning conditions were equally elevated on Vancouver Island. The Newcastle Creek wildfire (V80527) discovered on May 29, burned nearly a metre deep into the ground.

In June and July, temperatures were significantly above historical averages. Many weather stations in B.C. recorded monthly temperatures in their top ten warmest ever recorded. In addition to the prolonged hot conditions, rainfall was very limited with only 20 to 60 per cent of normal rainfall being received. Lightning activity also increased significantly. Between July 7 and July 13, 51,000 lightning strikes were recorded in B.C., with 76 per cent of those concentrated in the Northwest and Prince George Fire Centres. As a result, 399 new wildfires started in that seven-day period.

Conditions through early August were much of the same – hot and dry. Between August 15-18, over 40 new temperature records were set. This heatwave was followed by a dry cold front which spread strong gusting winds of 40 to 60 kilometres per hour for a 24-hour period from B.C.’s northwest, through Interior regions, before finally passing through the province’s southeast corner. Following the extreme heat and strong wind event, numerous wildfires exhibited extreme fire behaviour and spread exponentially, including the Kookipi Creek wildfire (V11337) near Boston Bar, the Downton Lake wildfire (K71649) near Gold Bridge, the Casper Creek wildfire (K71535) near Shalalth, the Crater Creek wildfire (K52125) near Keremeos, the McDougall Creek wildfire (K52767) adjacent to West Kelowna and the Bush Creek East (K21633) and Lower East Adams Lake (K21620) wildfires in the Shuswap, which merged as a result.

September brought no reprieve for northern B.C. Conditions were persistently warm and dry, coupled with repeated cold front passages. Significant increase in wind speeds and shifting directions lasted over multiple days multiple times over the month. The wind events supported increased activity on longstanding fires across northern B.C., spreading 10 to 40 kilometres in one day.

Fire Activity

Fire Centre Statistics

Fire centre statistics are from April 1 to October 31, 2023.

Fire Centre	Number of Wildfires	Hectares Burned
Cariboo Fire Centre	247	53,648

Fire Centre	Number of Wildfires	Hectares Burned
Coastal Fire Centre	365	89,750
Kamloops Fire Centre	388	201,385
Northwest Fire Centre	277	174,796
Prince George Fire Centre	672	2,276,938
Southeast Fire Centre	296	44,027

At the peak of wildfire activity, there were 481 wildfires burning concurrently.

Wildfires of Note

In 2023, 60 wildfires were classified as Wildfires of Note. A Wildfire of Note is a fire that is particularly visible or posing a threat to public safety. All 2023 Wildfires of Note are listed in the below table. The table can be searched or sorted by fire name alphabetically, or by hectares burned.

2023 Wildfires of Note Search table					
Fire Centre	Fire Name	Fire Number	Hectares Burned	Date of Discovery	Cause
Cariboo	4.3km SE of Teepee Lake	C11499	7,864	10-Jul	Natural
Cariboo	2.5km N of Pelican Lake	C11437	4,422.1	09-Jul	Natural

2023 Wildfires of Note

Search table

Fire Centre	Fire Name	Fire Number	Hectares Burned	Date of Discovery	Cause
Cariboo	Townsend Creek (2.5km E of Margaret Lake)	C11290	2,784.7	08-Jul	Natural
Cariboo	E of Dripping Water Rd	C50100	209.0	27-Apr	Human
Cariboo	3.3km SW of Pelican Lake	C50354	145.0	17-May	Human
Coastal	Kookipi Creek	V11337	17,405.9	18-Aug	Natural
Coastal	Young Creek	VA1735	3,360.0	15-Jul	Natural
Coastal	Dean River	VA1335	2,337.6	08-Jul	Natural
Coastal	E of Chehalis River	V10588	767.2	03-Jun	Human
Coastal	Cameron Bluffs	V70600	229.0	03-Jun	Human

10

57 total items

1

2

3

4

5

6

Wildfire Complexes

With the high number of wildfires throughout B.C., many Wildfires of Note and other wildfires in similar locations were grouped into “complexes”. A complex is created when multiple wildfires are managed by a single Incident Management Team, and resources and equipment are shared between all incidents in the complex. There were 14 complexes in 2023:



- **Gillies Complex, Cariboo Fire Centre:** Pelican Lake (C11437), Teepee Lake (C11499), Townsend Creek (C11290), Branch Road (C11243), Trout Lake (C11308)
- **Kappan Complex, Cariboo Fire Centre:** Gatcho Lake (G41158), Moose Lake (G41189) which merged with Gatcho Lake, Lily Lake (G41165) which merged with Gatcho Lake, Corkscrew Creek (C11405), Trumpeter Mountain (VA1456), Anahim Peak (C51571), Elbow Lake (VA1462), Young Creek (VA1735), Grizzly Creek (VA1167), Irene Lake (C11892), Satoh Mountain (C51562)
- **Kookipi Complex, Coastal Fire Centre:** Kookipi Creek (V11337), Texas Creek (K71415), Stein Mountain (K71634), Ponderosa Creek (K71705), Rutledge Creek (K71707), Cottonwood Creek (K72705), Izman Creek (K72771)
- **Adams Complex, Kamloops Fire Centre:** Bush Creek East (K21633), Lower East Adams Lake (K21620) which merged with Bush Creek East, Rossmoore Lake (K22024)
- **Bendor Range Complex, Kamloops Fire Centre:** Downton Lake (K71649), Casper Creek (K71535), Blackhills (K71778)
- **Crater Complex, Kamloops Fire Centre:** Crater Creek (K52125), Upper Park Rill Creek (K52813)
- **Grouse Complex, Kamloops Fire Centre:** McDougall Creek (K52767), Walroy Lake (K52808), Clarke Creek (K42815), Glen Lake (K53294)
- **Donnie Creek Complex, Prince George Fire Centre:** Donnie Creek (G80280), West Conroy Creek (G80287) which was consumed by Donnie Creek, Katah Creek (G80274) which was consumed by Donnie Creek, Kahntah River (G81157) which was consumed by Donnie Creek, Klua Lakes (G90273), Muskwa River (G90292), Zarembo Creek (G80875), Beaton River (G81492), Milligan Hills (G81530), Fontas River (G81010) which was consumed by Hay River (G90628)
- **North Peace Complex, Prince George Fire Centre:** Cameron River (G80175), Boundary Lake (G80220), Red Creek (G80223), Stoddart Creek (G80291)
- **Omineca Complex, Prince George Fire Centre:** Big Creek (G60666), Nation River (G60853), Usilika Lake (G60882) which was consumed by Big Creek, Mesilinka River (G60651) which was consumed by Big Creek, Fall River (G50851) which was consumed by Big Creek, Muscovite Lakes (G60655), Porcupine Mountain (G60861)
- **South Peace Complex, Prince George Fire Centre:** Peavine Creek (G70644), West Kiskatinaw River (G70645)
- **Elk Complex, Southeast Fire Centre:** Lladnar Creek (N12046), Mount Bingay (N12546)
- **Horsethief Complex, Southeast Fire Centre:** Horsethief Creek (N22243), Yearling Creek (N21453), Mia Creek (N22240), Jubilee Mountain (N22370), Schofield Creek (N22508)

In some cases, fire zones had anywhere from 15 to 50 active fires burning concurrently. To manage the situation, Ministry Zone Operations Centres (MZOCs) were stood up. MZOCs provided support and coordinated response efforts and resources for the defined areas experiencing heavy wildfire demands. Every fire centre had a zone or zones that activated MZOCs.

Fire Bans

Over the season, all fire centres implemented Category 1 (campfire), Category 2 and Category 3 open fire prohibitions. Fire prohibitions are put into place on a regional basis to prevent human-caused wildfires. Many factors are taken into consideration when deciding to implement or rescind an open fire prohibition including fire danger ratings, fuel



conditions, local hazards, current and forecasted wildfire activity, as well as current and forecasted weather. Conditions are assessed constantly to make well-informed decisions that best serve our province. Learn more about the science behind open fire prohibitions on our [YouTube channel](#).

The public's responsible and safe use of fire, or any activity that may have caused a wildfire, was key in keeping overall human-caused wildfires low.

Cultural and Prescribed Fire

Prescribed and cultural fire was utilized throughout the spring and fall for a variety of objectives, including wildfire risk reduction for protection of communities and critical infrastructure, ecosystem restoration, silviculture objectives such as site preparation and habitat objectives. A total of 23 burning projects covering 2,241.4 hectares were completed.

Wildfire reduction activities, such as cultural burning and prescribed fire, can help mitigate large-scale wildfires and their negative impacts on air quality, health, and safety. Fostering collaboration with local communities and the public regarding the importance of reintroducing fire to the landscape in a planned and controlled way, either from a cultural or prescribed fire perspective, is of the utmost importance. These practices are conducted in short intervals and under conditions that limit unintended smoke impacts. To prevent damage and disaster which result from uncontrolled wildfires, and to maintain the health and safety of our forests, communities and wildlife, cultural and prescribed fire will continue to become a more common practice.

Resourcing

Our organization went into the 2023 wildfire season with approximately 2,000 firefighting and support personnel.

Before wildfire activity in B.C. escalated, we were able to assist neighbouring jurisdictions and partners who were facing heightened fire activity. Our firefighters and specialized staff supported in Alberta, Quebec and Alaska.

Upwards of 1,100 personnel were contracted to provide various fire-related functions, including fire suppression, tree falling, first aid, catering and security.

We worked in partnership with numerous structural and municipal fire departments to protect threatened communities. Approximately 135 fire departments deployed to wildfire incidents 646 times.

Five Indigenous Initial Response crews bolstered response efforts, suppressing wildfires within their territory, individually and alongside BC Wildfire Service.

Heavy equipment and operational partnerships were, as always, imperative to wildfire response this fire season. More than 450 pieces of heavy equipment and their operators responded to wildfires across the province. Operating side-by-side with firefighters, heavy equipment is primarily engaged to build guards that support or make use of existing fuel breaks, including roads and natural features (such as rivers), to minimize additional damage to the natural environment. Learn more about heavy equipment operations on the fireline on our [YouTube channel](#). In addition to providing operational support, as well as local knowledge and expertise, we rely heavily on the contracting community to assist with the rehabilitation of damage due to fire suppression related activities. West Fraser, Western Forest Products, Canfor, Interfor, Tolko, Interior Lumber Manufacturers Association, Interior Logging Association and the Council of Forest Industries provided invaluable support.

More support came from hundreds of other local partners in First Nations communities and governments, the forest and ranching sectors, local governments and other ministries, all with diverse and valuable skillsets. The regional knowledge and expertise brought by our partners helps our staff and crews make informed choices about response tactics while making the smallest impact to ecosystems, other values including culturally significant resources and timber.

As wildfire activity increased in June and July, significant out-of-province resources were mobilized to support efforts within the province. Approximately 1,750 personnel came from out-of-province to support the wildfire fight in B.C. Assistance came from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, the Yukon, the Canadian Armed Forces, the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica and South Africa.

Our partners at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and Australia's Forest Fire Management Victoria provided specialized support in response planning and operations. They exchanged knowledge with us which will help inform future technology and decision-making regarding fire intelligence, advanced planning and fire growth modelling.

Nine airtanker groups were stationed throughout the province this season, including one group from Alberta. Four additional CL-415s were also on hire. The airtankers completed 44 practices and 816 missions. The 10-year average is 509 missions. More than 16.9 million litres of fire suppressant were used and more than 19.2 million litres of fire retardant were used. The total number of airtankers and birddog aircraft engaged was 36. This does not include dozens of other fixed-wing aircraft which were utilized for repositioning personnel, reconnaissance and logistical support.

Rotary-wing aircraft were another resource used heavily in the wildfire fight. More than 48,800 hours of flight time was recorded by long term and casual hire helicopters. The most helicopters contracted on a single day was 150.

Land-Based Recovery

An emerging area of business is the Wildfire Land-Based Recovery Program, which aims to prescribe and implement activities that assist with the overall recovery of the land base that has been damaged due to these ever-increasing disastrous wildfires.

Of the 5,132.77 kilometres of fire guard built this season, approximately 1,207.13 kilometres has been rehabilitated. Nine of 15 wildfire suppression rehabilitation project plans have been completed.

There are many techniques to help landscapes recover from wildfires, from repairing damaged infrastructure to improving the resiliency of forests so they're better able to withstand future disasters. In addition to the provincial government, wildfire land-based recovery work is carried out by local governments, First Nations, industry, stakeholders, and other organizations throughout the province.

Looking ahead

The 2023 wildfire season was long, impactful and challenging, and the people and communities of British Columbia continue to feel the effects of the season in the months to come.



Our province and our organization will continue to be resilient and adaptable, taking the events and learnings from this wildfire season to better prepare us for future emergencies and disasters.

A comprehensive and progressive emergency management framework was introduced this fall through the Emergency and Disaster Management Act, along with the announcement of the [expert task force on emergencies](#), with representatives from First Nations, local governments, provincial government and more. Task force members will draw on their individual expertise, and will engage with front-line workers, First Nations, local governments and key industries, such as agriculture and tourism that experienced challenges during the 2023 wildfire season and how we will move forward together.

Throughout this winter and heading into 2024, we will continue working with our partners to improve cooperation with communities that possess local knowledge and expertise. BC Wildfire Service is currently developing solutions to expand training and equipment opportunities to communities interested in integrating with our operations in a safe and respectful way.

Wildfire prevention and risk mitigation will remain a key focus for community protection, including that of critical infrastructure and special values. FireSmart BC and the funding that is allocated through the Community Resilience Investment program is available to be utilized by local governments for initiatives such as the expansion of the FireSmart recognized neighbourhood program, and for forest sectors contractors to implement mechanical treatments.

To learn more about how the BC Wildfire Service operates across all four pillars of emergency management, please explore the rest of this site.



Prevention

Reduce the negative impacts of wildfire on public safety, property, the environment and the economy using the seven disciplines of the FireSmart program. Learn about funding available for communities and actions you can take on your property on our [wildfire prevention funding webpage](#).





Preparedness

Preparing for a wildfire event increases the resiliency of our homes and communities. Access valuable resources to prepare your family for an emergency by reading the [wildfire preparedness guide](#).



Response

The BC Wildfire Service detects, monitors and responds to an average of 1,600 wildfires per year. Learn more about wildland firefighting on our [wildfire response webpage](#).





Recovery

Wildfire recovery considers the social, economic and environmental impacts a wildfire may have on an area. Get more information about community supports after a wildfire event on our [wildfire recovery resources webpage](#).

Work with us

The BC Wildfire Service has a number of seasonal positions open for application across the province, including crew members, dispatchers, asset management assistants and more! If you are interested in fast-paced, meaningful and exciting work, we have employment for you! Take a look at our [Seasonal Job Opportunities webpage](#) to learn what positions are available! Be sure to check back regularly for new opportunities.

Tapes of 2023

Play, pause, fast forward and rewind the season on our [YouTube channel](#).

Previous Wildfire Season Summaries

Expand All

Collapse All

2022 wildfire season



2021 Wildfire Season Summary



2020 Wildfire Season Summary



- [2019 Wildfire Season Summary](#) ▼
- [2018 Wildfire Season Summary](#) ▼
- [2017 Wildfire Season Summary](#) ▼
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- [2010 Wildfire Season Summary](#) ▼
- [2009 Wildfire Season Summary](#) ▼
- [2003 Wildfire Season Summary*](#) ▼

*2003 is included due to it being one of the most severe fire seasons on record in B.C.

Did you find what you were looking for?

The B.C. Public Service acknowledges the territories of First Nations around B.C. and is grateful to carry out our work on these lands. We acknowledge the rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of all Indigenous Peoples - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit - respecting and acknowledging their distinct cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments.



We can help in over 120 languages and through Telephone Device For The Deaf (TDD). [Call, email or text us](#), or [find a service centre](#)

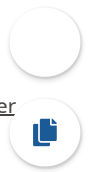
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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Apply for a Canada Day micro grant

On May 10, the Province of BC announced an open burning ban for the entire province which includes Fireworks. Due to this ban, the City of Fort St. John will not be able to host the annual Canada Day Fireworks, so event staff have come up with a new idea to create more Canada Day fun for you.

The City of Fort St. John invites local businesses and non-profit organizations to open their doors and offer family friendly activities for residents to enjoy during the day on July 1, with micro grants available to financially support pre-approved activities.

The City of Fort St. John will provide a one-time micro grant of \$500 dollars up to a maximum of \$1,000 per business or non-profit to cover the expenses of an approved activity plan. Micro grants are granted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Activity eligible requirements:

- Applicants must operate a business or non-profit in the City of Fort St. John
- Hold a valid business license or non-profit number and insurance
- Have their own staff available to run activities
- Be in charge of registrations and/or bookings (if activity needs pre-registration)
- Activities must be:
 - Family Friendly
 - Free of charge for participants
 - Offered between 4-8pm on July 1
- Provide a detailed description of the proposed activity you'd like to offer at your business
- The activity must be approved by the City prior to advertising
- After the event, submit a report including event photos and budget expenses

The deadline to apply is June 7. Staff will review applications and confirm by email that the activity has been approved. The City will also help to promote the activity leading up to July 1.

For more information and to apply for a grant, visit fortstjohn.ca/canada-day-celebrations.

In addition to micro grants, the City of Fort St. John Canada Day Celebrations include a community parade, pancake breakfast at the Fire Hall, and a variety of activities in Centennial Park and Festival Plaza. See fortstjohn.ca/canada-day-celebrations for complete details.

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