



February 19, 2026

Public Safety Canada
Via email: EMEngagement-EngagementsGU@ps-sp.gc.ca

Re: Public Engagement on Emergency Management

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), representing all 137 municipalities in Manitoba, we welcome the public engagement on strengthening the federal government's role in emergency management. Municipalities are on the front lines of climate-driven disasters—wildfires, floods, extreme heat and storms—that are increasing in frequency, duration and severity, placing unprecedented strain on local governments, infrastructure and housing.

The AMM supports the recommendations in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) submission, which reflects on-the-ground realities and offers a practical framework to modernize Canada's emergency management system. We endorse its emphasis on prevention and preparedness, stronger local capacity, improved support for evacuees and host communities, enhanced national coordination, and recovery that reduces future risk rather than rebuilding to pre-disaster conditions.

Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

Since Canada's emergency management framework must adapt to prolonged and concurrent disasters, we support stronger federal coordination, improved interoperability, and more robust national standards and data systems. All orders of government must enhance collaboration and municipalities must have a seat at the table in multi-jurisdictional responses as local knowledge is essential to effective decision-making.

In this regard, stronger federal leadership and coordination are critical to protect Canadians, contain future disaster costs, and ensure that communities of all sizes can respond effectively when emergencies occur. To this end, we support sustained federal investment in mitigation and adaptation through programs such as the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund and the Green Municipal Fund.

Historically, Manitoba has also been a major user of Canada's Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA). We therefore supported the recent modernization of the DFAA and encouraged the federal government to closely monitor its implementation. Recovery programs must enable communities to "build back better," reduce future risk and provide municipalities with timely, predictable and accessible funding.

Specifically, the federal government should:

- *Increase investments in large-scale and regional mitigation projects that protect critical infrastructure and communities;*
- *Ensure smaller, rural and remote municipalities can access funding for risk assessments and replicable adaptation projects; and*
- *Embed resilience into all federal infrastructure and housing programs.*



Local Emergency Management Capacity

Municipal first responders—firefighters, police, emergency managers and volunteers—are consistently the first on scene during disasters. Their responsibilities are expanding, yet their fiscal and human resource capacities are not keeping pace.

We support FCM's recommendations to:

- *Invest in emergency response workforce development, training and specialized equipment;*
- *Reinstate the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) or similar program; and*
- *Strengthen RCMP and local policing capacity, especially in rural, northern and remote regions.*

Sustainable federal support is essential to maintain readiness, address burnout and recruitment challenges, and ensure equitable emergency response capacity across the country.

Support for Evacuees and Host Communities

Evacuations are becoming larger, longer and more frequent. Consequently, municipalities are becoming more involved in coordinating evacuations, operating shelters and supporting displaced residents, often with little notice and limited resources. At the same time, host communities face sudden strain on housing, health services and infrastructure.

We support FCM's recommendation that the federal government proactively identify and invest in multi-purpose emergency facilities and improve funding mechanisms so municipalities are not forced to absorb major upfront costs. Clear, timely and flexible reimbursement is critical, especially when disasters overlap or occur in successive seasons.

National Coordination and Standards

Canada's emergency management framework was not designed for prolonged, concurrent disasters across multiple jurisdictions. We support FCM's call for stronger federal leadership in national coordination, including:

- *Investing in regional response capacities;*
- *Improving interoperability of systems and training; and*
- *Enhancing national standards, data platforms and risk awareness.*

The Importance of Broadband and Cellular Connectivity for Public Safety in Manitoba

During the 2025 wildfire season and evacuation of over 32,000 Manitobans, connectivity gaps undermined alerts, coordination, and situational awareness. Federal programs such as the Universal Broadband Fund (UBF) have, in our view, had limited impact on improving broadband connectivity for municipal Manitoba. Of the \$3.225 billion allocated to the UBF, only one municipal-led project in Manitoba has successfully received funding to our knowledge. This is deeply concerning, particularly given that Manitoba consistently ranks among the provinces with the slowest internet speeds in Canada and that many rural communities have advocated for improved connectivity for years—if not decades.

We strongly support FCM's call for accelerated and more effective action to close the digital divide. Rural communities must have access to broadband speeds and service reliability that meet or exceed national targets. Equally important is comprehensive and reliable cellular coverage along highways, within communities, and across agricultural and resource areas. In Manitoba, where vast distances and



wildfire and flood risks are common, cellular and broadband connectivity are not luxuries—they are core public safety infrastructure.

We also note that current CRTC connectivity maps often misrepresent on-the-ground realities in Manitoba, creating a false picture of service availability and hindering effective investment decisions. Accurate, community-validated data must underpin federal policy and funding, so resources are directed to areas with the greatest need and highest risk.

Therefore, the AMM recommends federal investments must:

- *Prioritize underserved and hard-to-reach areas where market forces alone are insufficient;*
- *Integrate emergency management objectives into all connectivity programs;*
- *Ensure funding timelines and criteria reflect the urgency of rural connectivity needs; and*
- *Be grounded in accurate data.*

Concluding Remarks

In closing, municipalities are central to Canada’s emergency management system, yet their responsibilities and risks are growing faster than their fiscal and operational capacities. Stronger federal leadership—focused on prevention, preparedness, coordination, and resilient recovery—is essential.

We urge the Government of Canada to act decisively to modernize emergency management, close critical infrastructure gaps such as broadband and cellular service, and work in true partnership with municipalities to protect Canadians today and in the decades ahead.

Sincerely,

Denys Volkov
Executive Director

cc: Hon. Eleanor Olszewski, Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience,
Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada
Hon. Rebecca Chartrand, Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, Minister responsible for the
Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
Hon. Glen Simard, Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations (Manitoba)
Hon. Lisa Naylor, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (Manitoba)
Rebecca Bligh, FCM President