

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hotline established for businesses impacted by B.C. wildfires

Provincial utility in partnership with BC Economic Development Association deploys contact centre resources to handle calls

CHILLIWACK, B.C., July 21, 2017 – The British Columbia Economic Development Association (BCEDA) is launching a hotline to help businesses get back on their feet following the devastating fires impacting Central British Columbia. The hotline is established in collaboration with FortisBC.

The *Business Recovery Hotline* will begin operation on July 24, Monday through Friday during the hours of 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., for the first two weeks after evacuees begin to return back to their communities. This may be extended if the need is there. The number for the hotline is 1-877-4BC-EDRP (1-877-422-3377).

“Business owners are highly resilient, but we want to ensure that they have access to the necessary information to help them move forward,” said Dale Wheeldon, President and CEO of BCEDA. “Every community, regional district and First Nation are important to B.C. and we do everything we can to support them and their local economies.”

Business owners will be asked questions over the hotline that will help distinguish the businesses and community’s short and long-term needs. The information will then be shared with the communities, the Canadian Red Cross, Community Futures British Columbia, the Province of British Columbia, Chambers of Commerce and others to help them plan as the community moves forward. BCEDA is planning to send in economic recovery teams to assist communities in the recovery planning process.

The calls will be administered through energy utility FortisBC’s contact centres in Prince George and Burnaby.

“The wildfires have impacted many of the communities in which we live and work,” said Roger Dall’Antonia, Executive Vice-President of Customer Service at FortisBC. “We recognize the importance of caring for our communities, especially during difficult times, and as such want to do what we can for businesses in B.C.”

Some banks and other agencies have already announced short-term programs that are or will be available to businesses and home owners who have experienced significant disruptions as a result of the fires. This information and more will be available by calling the hotline.

The *Business Recovery Hotline* is just one part of BCEDA’s Economic Disaster Recovery Program originally started in B.C. following the devastating mill explosion in Burns Lake in 2012. It was then used by BCEDA and its counterpart Economic Developers Alberta following the flooding in 2013. Economic Developers

Alberta again used it following the Fort McMurray fire in 2016.

“We are all in this together,” added Wheeldon. “Whether you are in B.C., Alberta or any other province, it is important that we ignore jurisdictional lines and instead work together to enhance the liveability of our communities.”

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The British Columbia Economic Development Association of (BCEDA) is the leading professional association of economic development practitioners in the Province of BC. The BCEDA currently has over 500 members from communities throughout the Province. The BCEDA provides services that helps member communities grow and expand new and existing businesses, attract new business investments, and work towards strategic infrastructure investment, land use planning, and community enhancement.

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