

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BC Businesses Impacted by Wildfires are in Trouble

BCEDA and FortisBC are actively responding to the needs of impacted businesses that call Business Hotline

CHILLIWACK, B.C., July 31, 2017 – Data from the first week of the Business Recovery Hotline, shows that businesses impacted by the wildfires are in trouble. The hotline, organized by the BC Economic Development Association (BCEDA) and FortisBC, is receiving calls from businesses that have lost revenue while accruing operating expenses and have little information about what kind of financial assistance is available to them.

The *Business Recovery Hotline* is operating, Monday through Friday during the hours of 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. The number for the hotline is **1-877-4BC-EDRP (1-877-422-3377)**.

“Since the launch of the hotline on July 24th, over 100 businesses have called to seek information and to provide key details of the impact to them and their employees. It is heartbreaking to hear some of the stories of what they are experiencing and we are doing everything we can to get back to these businesses as new supports become available”, said Dale Wheeldon, President and CEO of BCEDA. “We have volunteer economic developers from around BC that are calling some businesses back to provide additional support and to keep them informed of new programs.”

Impacted businesses of all industries are encouraged to call today if they have experienced business interruption in any way. “Access has been cut off to many areas due to the wildfires,” says Wheeldon. “This can affect deliveries, shut down tourism providers, or prevent staff from attending work.”

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 incoming calls are being administered through energy utility FortisBC’s contact centres in Prince George and Burnaby.

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.

“Whether you are a business that has already returned to your community or one that is still evacuated we encourage you to call”, added Wheeldon. “The information you provide is a critical piece of helping us encourage supports from agencies that are all working hard to help everyone recover from the devastating wildfires.”

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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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