



Institute for Catastrophic
Loss Reduction

Building resilient communities

Institut de Prévention
des Sinistres Catastrophiques

Construction de resilient communities

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ICLR releases new book 'Cities adapt to extreme wildfires: Celebrating local leadership'

TORONTO: Local governments are taking action to reduce the risk to Canadians from extreme wildfires. *Cities adapt to extreme wildfires: Celebrating local leadership* is the fourth book by the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction extolling local governments adapting to climate change and building more resilient communities. The four books provide 80 case studies describing local action in Canada that is consistent with best practices for climate resilience as identified by the Institute. The Institute is pleased to share these narratives praising successful local action. These communities are demonstrating their commitment to 'get ahead' of the risk of damage from severe wildfire and climate change by building back better in recovery or through proactive investments in anticipation of future risks.

- Bob Simpson, Mayor of **Quesnel, BC**, told us "If you are an at-risk community for fire, nothing is more important than making the decision you are going to own it, identify how you are going to mitigate that risk and be the champion that influences other levels of governments to do what needs to be done."
- Since an evacuation in 1998, **Swan Hills, AB** prioritized action to reduce the risk of fire damage including requiring fire resistant roofing and protection near new and existing structures. Bill Lewis, Chief Administrative Officer, said "Get the public to understand why it may be important and put this regulation in your by-law."
- The threat of fire damage in **Wadin Bay, SK** in 2006 resulted in the community investing in sprinklers, pumps and hoses that could be applied to suppress fires. Denis Renaud, President of the Wadin Bay Cottage Association, said "We have a group that work well together, who can problem solve and gather around one common cause." The community was prepared when a major fire approached in 2015, and losses were prevented.
- Jamie Coutts, Fire Chief responsible for the recovery of **Slave Lake, AB** from the devastating fire in 2011 said, "When you provide people with the right education, they are in a better position to decide what is best for them."
- Larry Watkinson, Fire Chief, **Penticton, BC**, "It is important to look at all aspects of preparedness. Implementing programs such as FireSmart in your community is very important, but it is equally important to be prepared operationally."
- Keri Martens, Deputy Fire Chief, **Canmore, AB**, stresses the importance of adopting all seven FireSmart disciplines and the community has been working for more than twenty years toward progressing in each area.
- Pam Sanderson with the Executive Board of **Napatak, SK**, said "I think it's important to conduct the [wildfire risk reduction] work with the idea that your neighbours are important and that everyone should feel safe and secure in their community."
- Len MacCharles, Fire Chief, **Nelson, BC**, spoke about the importance of "taking the time to educate ourselves on best practices with the support of wildfire experts [which] allowed us to develop a meaningful by-law for our community."

- Dan Logan, Fire Chief, **Logan Lake, BC**, said, “Any community facing a wildfire threat should be looking at all available initiatives. The rooftop sprinkler program is a small part of the big picture, but it represents a great option for rural areas, especially in cases where people don’t have insurance or other options to protect buildings.”

Cities adapt to extreme wildfires also recognizes actions in **Thompson, MB; Botwood, NL; Enterprise, NWT; Bruderheim, AB; Calgary, AB; Shackan Indian Band and Xwisten First Nation, BC; Elliott Lake, ON; Rocky View County, AB; Kamloops, BC; District of North Vancouver, BC; Logan Lake, BC, and Killarney, ON.**

Cities adapt to extreme wildfires: Celebrating local leadership was written by Paul Kovacs, Sophie Guilbault, Esther Lambert and Robin Kovacs. The report builds on previous Institute reports – *Cities adapt to extreme rainfall*, *Cities adapt to extreme heat*, and *Cities adapt to extreme weather*. These communities are leading the way in Canada with risk reduction actions that other communities should consider.

Paul Kovacs, Executive Director of the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction said “The Institute is excited to identify and celebrate actions that have been implemented by community leaders across Canada to successfully adapt to climate related risks, which include wildfire. The identified actions are consistent with the Institute’s views about best practices to reduce the risk of loss and damage from extreme events. We are confident that similar actions will benefit most communities at risk. Most damage due to wildfire is preventable through the application of research by the Institute and others. This report puts a spotlight on local officials that demonstrate leadership through their actions to build a more resilient society adapted to cope with extreme weather and wildfire risks.”

Cities adapt to extreme wildfires: Celebrating local leadership can be downloaded for free at www.iclr.org/municipality

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Canada’s leading disaster research institute, the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR), was established by the insurance industry in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit research and outreach institute to champion disaster resilience in Canada. ICLR is an international centre of excellence affiliated with Western University. The Institute develops and champions evidence-based disaster safety solutions that can be implemented by homeowners, businesses and governments to enhance their disaster resilience.

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