



Introduction to the Economic Disaster Recovery Program

In 2012, the BCEDA developed the Economic Disaster Recovery Program (EDRP) to assist the community of **Burns Lake, BC** following the mill explosion. Working with the **International Economic Development Council (IEDC) and RestoreYourEconomy.org**, BCEDA established teams of volunteers to visit the community of Burns Lake and develop an Economic Recovery Plan which was implemented and recommendations accepted by the Province and the community.

After the success of the program, BCEDA continued to develop further and enhance the EDRP to be better prepared for future communities in times of crisis. It was hoped the EDRP would receive approval for long-term financial support from the Province of BC to ensure the program could immediately respond in a crisis. Until funding approval, BCEDA raised funds through auctions and other methods.

In April of 2013, BCEDA was asked by the United States Department of Commerce, and the IEDC to be part of a working group to develop an **Economic Disaster Framework for the United States**. Being the only Canadian as part of this group of well experienced EDO's, government officials and others were educational and heartening. It is especially heartening when you see the program being implemented in disaster affected areas including Texas, Florida, Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

In the summer of 2013, the **Government of Alberta and Economic Developers Alberta (EDA)** asked BCEDA to assist them in the development of an Economic Disaster Program for Alberta as part of the recovery process following the Southern Alberta Floods. As part of this program BCEDA, along with volunteers from the US and across Canada, visited eleven different communities and developed Economic Disaster Recovery Plans. This included one for the community of High River which was severely impacted by the floods. The program developed continues to be implemented in Alberta by our counterparts, EDA, and was used in the devastating 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires. Following the work in Alberta, BCEDA presented the Province of BC a report with recommendations to ensure that BC was prepared for a similar disaster in the future. Had the provincial recommendations in this report been acted upon, many of the issues that we experienced with economic recovery in 2017 and 2018 would have minimal.

During the **Wildfires In 2017**, the EDRP was initiated on July 7th during the wildfires and was the first program activated to provide business supports in BC – the first of any association or organization in BC during this difficult time. We had the assistance of FortisBC in operating a Business Recovery Hotline and a list of over 40 volunteers who worked with over 500 businesses to provide one on one support. While we had planned a three-phased process, only two phases were completed. Our third phase was to send in Economic Recovery Teams to the communities/regions, but the Province did not adopt this.

In April of 2018, we were asked by the IEDC and the US Economic Development Administration to provide support and leadership on business assessments in the **US Virgin Islands** due to the devastating



Hurricanes Irma and Maria. BCEDA is proud that IEDC and EDA will now use the EDRP process we developed for all future disasters.

Most recently the EDRP was sent to Grand Forks to assist in the economic recovery efforts due to the flooding the area experienced in May 2018. Following this section is a summary of the outcomes from the EDRP in **Grand Forks**. The EDRP was also launched during the wildfire season of 2018 and provide assistance and advice to businesses and local governments that were under evacuation alerts on steps to take to be prepared for the potential evacuation.

In addition to the program going into communities for economic recovery, the EDRP also delivers and facilitates training and workshops. The workshops provide communities with the knowledge in a hands-on environment for participants to leave with the beginnings of a recovery plan.

ERDP Project Mandate

Communities affected by disasters move from response to recovery by addressing permanent infrastructure repairs and by rebuilding or repairing homes. The role of economic development is to focus on meeting the needs of its business community and the overall local economy and the different factors that support and impact it. This is done by developing a renewal plan to accelerate economic recovery while re-evaluating existing policies and strategies that may be hindering economic recovery efforts.

Specific objectives of the EDRP:

- Gathering in-depth information on the current economic situation from the community/region by utilizing a variety of focus groups, stakeholder meetings and one-on-one interviews with stakeholders and the business community;
- Accessing unbiased expertise in disaster recovery as it relates to economic development;
- Improving integrating resilience into local and regional government programs;
- Gathering qualitative information from key community/regional stakeholders and business owners on pre-existing conditions before the flood, direct and indirect impacts, actions are taken to date, and identification of resource gaps/needs;
- Identifying potential opportunities for future action to assist the areas with their immediate, short, medium and long-term economic recovery efforts.
- Access to all data collected from businesses. The community has used BC BusinessCounts which will be used for the information collected from businesses. This information will end up being a legacy piece for the community going forward should they decide to retain the license.
- Training for local staff on how to use the program and how to conduct meetings with businesses.