

President of the King's Privy Council for Canada
and Minister of Emergency Preparedness
and Minister responsible for the
Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada



Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0A3

Président du Conseil privé du Roi pour le Canada
et ministre de la Protection civile
et ministre responsable de l'Agence de
développement économique du Pacifique Canada

March 7, 2025

His Worship Abraham Zebian
Mayor of West Hants Regional Municipality
P.O. Box 3000, 76 Morrison Drive
Windsor, Nova Scotia B0N 2T0

Dear Mr. Mayor:

Thank you for your correspondence of January 9, 2025, regarding financial support for a residential property buyout program in the West Hants Regional Municipality.

I want to acknowledge the problem you are facing in Windsor is a challenging one. Importantly, I want to acknowledge the actions your region plans to undertake as highly impactful investments in resilience. Residential property buyout programs and municipal sewer and stormwater infrastructure upgrades have high returns on investment and will go a very long way in supporting and providing residents with long-term protection from natural hazards in advance of another disaster.

It is a shared priority of all levels of government to keep people and economic assets out of harm's way. Public Safety Canada currently focuses on post-disaster mitigation through the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) program. While Provinces and Territories are responsible for the design and delivery of financial assistance to those who are affected by a natural disaster, when costs exceed what they may be reasonably expected to bear on their own they can ask the Federal Government for financial support through the DFAA.

The assistance offered via the DFAA is paid to the Province or Territory—not directly to affected individuals, small businesses, nor communities. It is important to note that all decisions regarding financial assistance to individuals, small businesses, and communities are taken by the affected Province or Territory, the DFAA simply sets out which costs will be eligible for cost-sharing with the Federal Government.

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However, we recognize that Canada's disaster landscape has changed significantly since the DFAA program was first created in 1970. To address the cycle of perpetual disaster losses experienced by so many communities across Canada, which result in profound and unsustainable impacts to people, communities and the economy, this program underwent an extensive review and modernization process between 2020 and 2023.

The reduction of repeat disaster impacts and costs is central to the new program, which will take effect on April 1, 2025, applying to disasters that occur on or after that date. Funding through the modernized program will emphasize strategic mitigation, building back homes and communities to more resilient levels, and supporting people in recovery. The program will also help to incentivize Provinces and Territories to reduce risk in areas with the greatest hazard exposure, through risk reduction activities such as relocation and buyout programs, protecting communities using natural and conventional protective infrastructure, and upgrading the resilience of public assets and infrastructure.

While this modernized DFAA program is well-positioned to cost share such supports in the *post*-disaster phase, it also includes some financial incentives for Provinces and Territories to improve their *pre*-disaster mitigation planning and coordination with local governments. Therefore, we encourage you to reach out to your provincial counterparts to discuss mitigation planning for programs such as yours, that can help reduce risk for properties at the highest risk.

Thank you for taking the time to write regarding this important issue in the community of Windsor. Public Safety Canada will continue to work with the Provinces and Territories on how best to mitigate disaster risk within emergency management.

We appreciate the opportunity to clarify our role and to underline the Government of Canada's continued commitment to support Nova Scotia with the costs of large-scale disasters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Harjit Sajjan', is positioned above the printed name of the Minister.

The Honourable Harjit Sajjan, P.C., O.M.M., M.S.M., C.D., M.P.

c.c.: The Honourable Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities