

Wildfire Resilience and a Cross-Government Approach in British Columbia

POLIS Wildfire Resilience Project, University of Victoria — Ember Insights Series

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Report Summary

1. British Columbia — and the world — has entered a period of wildfire crisis with increasing economic, environmental, and social impacts. Some call this period *the Pyrocene*.
2. Addressing this wildfire crisis is a significant provincial priority.
3. The B.C. provincial government is not optimally organized or structured to address current or future wildfire challenges or to ensure wildfire resilience* at the landscape level.
4. By shifting from a priority focus on wildfire suppression to a focus on landscape-level resilience, and by emphasizing cross-government integration and better collaboration, the provincial government can leverage capacity — both within and external to government — and save money over time. This should include:
 - ✓ Spending current dollars more effectively to maintain wildfire response and prevention capabilities.
 - ✓ Finding efficiencies by correcting where policies and programs are working at cross purposes.
 - ✓ Providing a mechanism to implement future policy innovations and new priorities in a systematic, efficient, and effective way, including better implementation of recommendations from prior reviews and reports.
 - ✓ Identifying cross-government areas for new investment to improve wildfire resilience.
 - ✓ Enhanced collaboration and leveraging of complementing programs and activities within the provincial government and more broadly across communities and other levels of government.
5. Increased wildfire resilience will better buffer against catastrophic wildfire. Numerous other benefits include protecting drinking water, biodiversity, old growth forests, and human settlements; reducing health costs; advancing watershed security; and allowing governments and broader society to prioritize areas in need of explicit interventions and

About the series

The POLIS Wildfire Resilience Project's *Ember Insights* series explores timely and innovative aspects of wildfire resilience with a focus on technical and governance reform opportunities. This series is designed to be practical and to the point. It is purposely focused on the emerging wildfire resilience field while offering broader connections to advance ecological governance.

Who is it for?

The audiences for this document are ministries in the B.C. provincial government with wildfire-related responsibilities and cabinet more generally. This includes government decision-makers and senior staff, as well as wildfire resilience champions and influencers outside of government. This analysis is also for anyone with interest in wildfire resilience, governance, and wildfire public policy more generally.

suppression to protect valued assets, such as hospitals, schools, roads, homes, and other infrastructure.

6. A cross-government approach to wildfire should include a *project charter* and a designated *champion* to ensure clarity and specify roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for each participating provincial ministry.

*We use the term "wildfire resilience" in the context of social-ecological system resilience involving linked systems of people and nature, as defined by the Stockholm Resilience Centre. See <https://poliswildfireproject.org/understanding-resilience/>

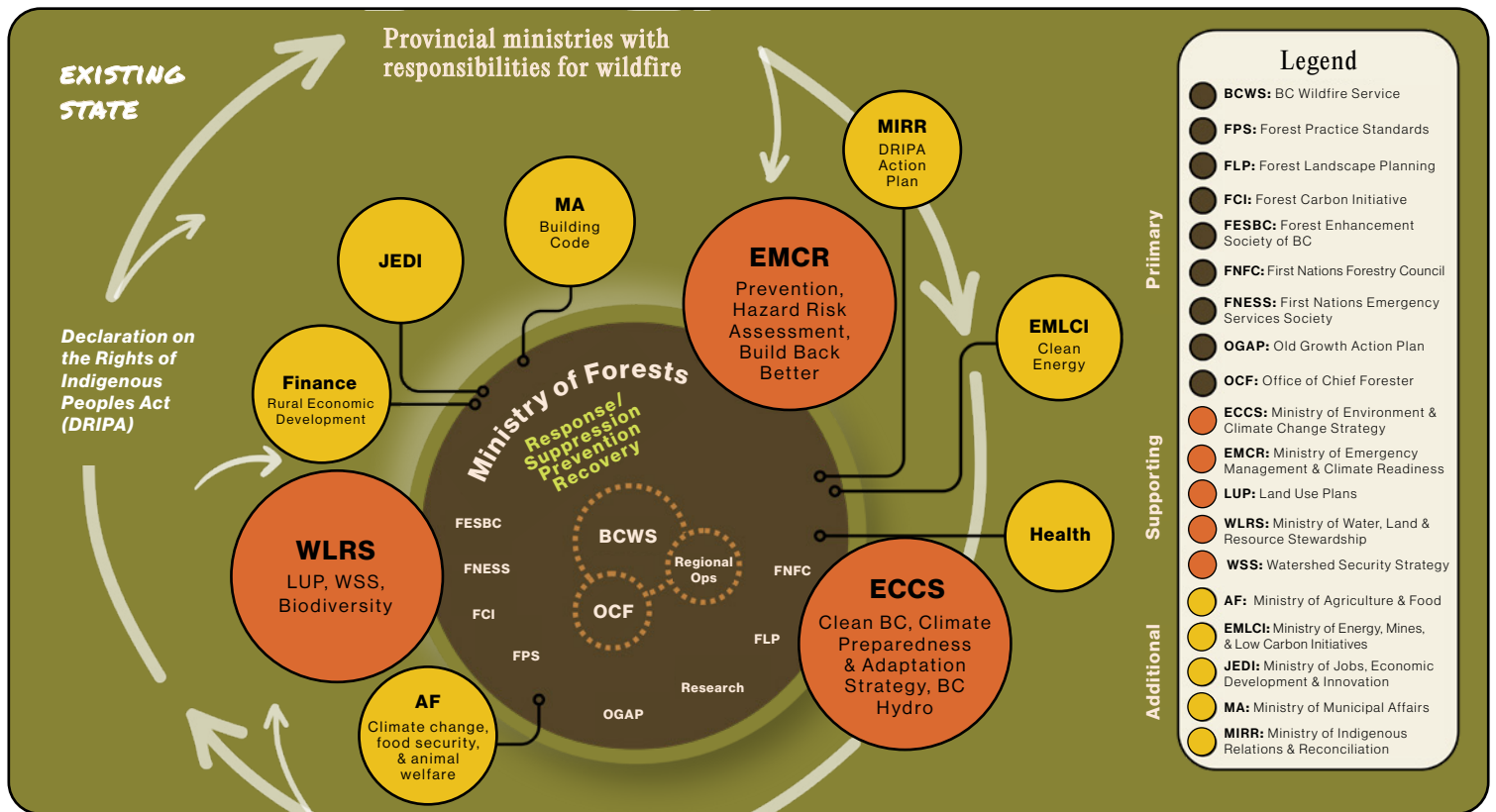
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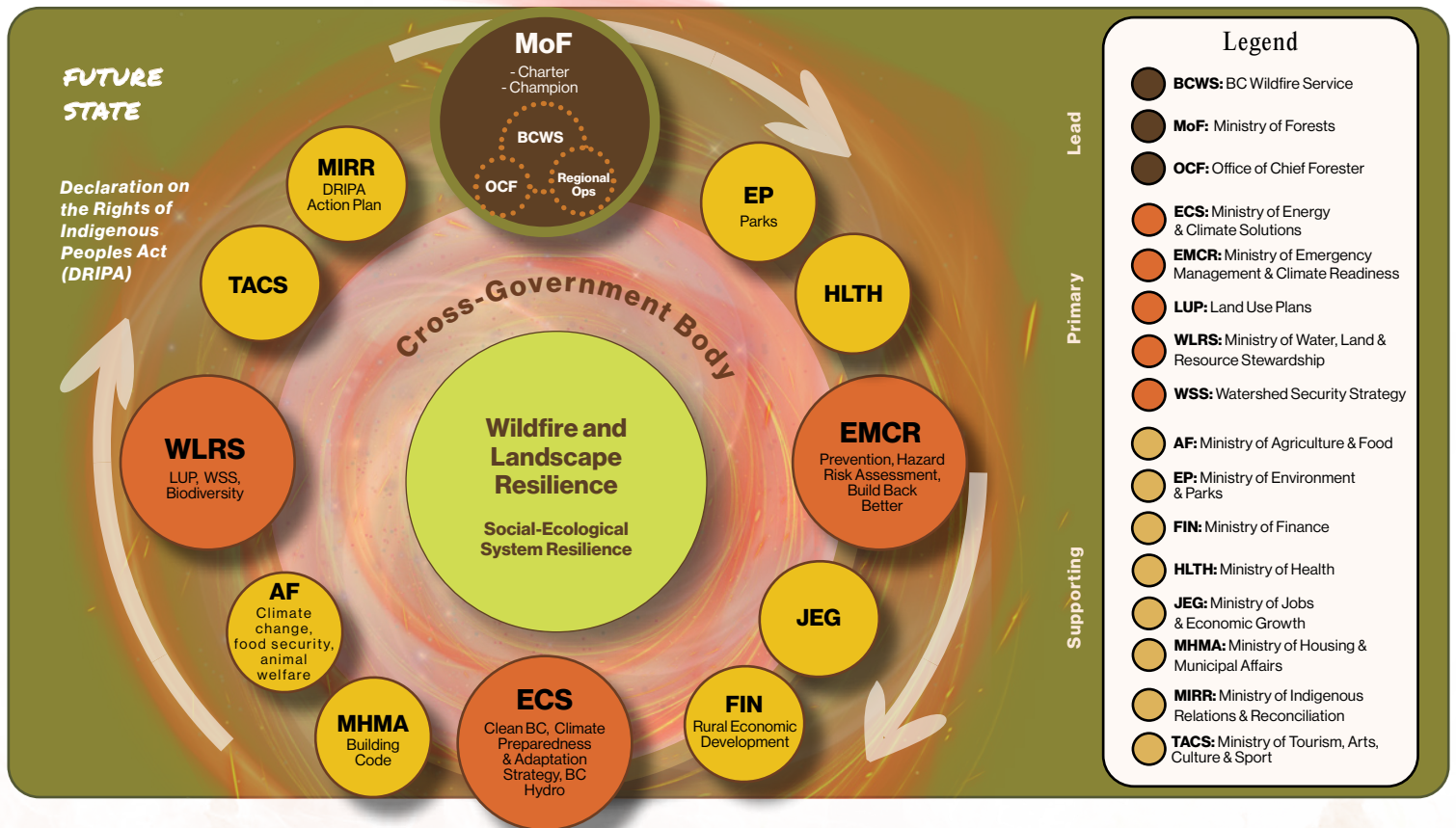
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Existing state of form follows function regarding B.C. ministries interacting on wildfire resilience, with response and suppression at the core. Graphic adapted from "Learning to Live with Fire: State of Wildfire in B.C.—Policy, Programs & Priorities" (see page 33 <https://poliswildfireproject.org/publications/learning-to-live-with-fire/>).



Future state of form follows function regarding B.C. ministries interacting on wildfire resilience through a cross-government body, with wildfire and landscape resilience at the core.

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