



## Key Request:

The Provincial Government is requested to develop a comprehensive, multi-level government strategy for maintaining the local channels of the lower Fraser River and develop a dredging plan, with dedicated funding, to resolve this long-standing issue.

## Background:

The local channels of the lower Fraser River are critical for ensuring access to businesses, marinas, and float home communities, playing an essential role in the regional economy and the daily lives of residents. Recognizing their significance, the Province of British Columbia, the City of Delta, the City of Richmond, and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (VFPA) entered into a \$10 million joint funding agreement in 2013. This initiative aimed to restore the channels around Ladner and Steveston to their pre-1990 depths. Major dredging was carried out in 2014/2015, followed by targeted "spot dredging" between 2018 and 2023 to address areas with high sediment accumulation.

However, the Fraser River's natural sedimentation processes have continued to affect these channels, creating a critical situation as the waterways are once again approaching their pre-2013 sediment levels. The original funding has been fully exhausted, leaving several key issues unresolved:

1. **Lack of Dedicated Funding:** No established funding source exists to ensure the ongoing maintenance of these channels.

2. **Absence of a Long-Term Plan:** A comprehensive, long-term strategy for maintaining the secondary channels of the lower Fraser River has yet to be developed.
3. **Regulatory Complexity:** The dredging process is hindered by a complicated regulatory framework and stringent environmental considerations, making timely interventions difficult.

Recognizing the urgency, a working group was formed in January 2023, including the City of Delta, City of Richmond, VFPA, and representatives from both the Government of Canada and the Province of BC. This group is collaborating with senior government officials to develop and secure funding for a sustainable local channel dredging strategy.

Unfortunately, this working group has been unable to develop any funding plans as evident in a letter dated July 31, 2025 from Deputy Minister Lori Halls to Simon Everatt, President of the South Fraser River Enhancement Society. In this letter, the Province continues to articulate that “WLRS is not responsible for conducting dredging or issuing contracts to do so. Additionally, WLRS does not hold funding to support dredging programs or needs within the Lower Fraser.” As well, in this letter Deputy Minister Halls explained that “it is understood that no provincial funding is available to support side channel dredging this fiscal year.”

The City of Delta continues to advocate for both the provincial and federal governments to come together with local partners, as has been done in the past, to identify funding to address this critical and long-standing issue. Further, a comprehensive, long-term strategy for maintaining the secondary channels of the lower Fraser River is needed.