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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate  
Readiness

### **Province supports search-and-rescue teams for a safer backcountry**

VICTORIA – The Province is providing nearly \$6 million to the B.C. Search and Rescue Association (BCSARA) so that ground search-and-rescue (GSAR) groups can continue to have the training, equipment and resources they need to help keep people safe.

B.C.'s GSAR groups are at their busiest this time of year, between keeping people safe in the backcountry and assisting with wildfire evacuations in the province.

“We are incredibly proud and grateful for our province’s search-and-rescue teams who work tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of people in need,” said Bowinn Ma, Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. “In addition to reimbursements for operational expenses, this funding helps B.C.’s 78 GSAR groups and 3,000 volunteers access the training and resources they need to carry out their vital work of keeping people safe.”

The annual funding builds on steps the Province has taken to improve the tools, resources and training available to GSAR, including making it easier for search-and-rescue groups to add capabilities, such as search dogs, to their teams. Additionally, work is underway to complete a needs and gap analysis to determine where new capabilities are required to meet operational needs of keeping people safe.

“BCSARA and the 78 GSAR groups appreciate the continued support of the Province,” said Chris Mushumanski, president, BCSARA. “The annual funding is a result of the collaborative relationship we have together cultivated over decades. The benefits of this sustainable funding are put to good use by the incredibly dedicated volunteers in the GSAR groups daily, and includes our Adventure Hub public education and prevention program as well as the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) mental-health program.”

This is the third year of the annual funding agreement between the Province and the BC Search and Rescue Association, which is the only agreement of its kind in Canada. In addition to this sustained annual funding, the Province also provides incident-related reimbursements to GSAR groups to cover operational search-and-rescue costs, which amounted to nearly \$5.5 million in 2023-24.

“During an unfortunate situation where I was unable to get off North Star Hill in Kimberley, BCSARA was called,” said Ali Currie-Bell, a visitor from Calgary area who was assisted by GSAR. “They stayed in constant contact, reassuring and comforting us. Their calm handling of the situation and quick action got me the medical care I needed. I am grateful for everything they did to get us home safely.”

During emergencies and other urgent situations, GSAR groups provide critical assistance to requesting agencies, such as the police and BC Emergency Health Services. GSAR groups were

deployed to 1865 incidents in B.C. in 2023 and to 1030 incidents to date in 2024.

**Learn More:**

For more information about BC Search and Rescue Association, visit: <https://bcsara.com/>

To follow on Facebook, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/BCAdvSmart>

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To follow on X (formerly Twitter), visit: <https://twitter.com/bcadvsmart?lang=en>

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