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## NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier  
Ministry of Forests and Range

### **B.C. HELPS TO BUILD GREEK WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS**

VANCOUVER – The Province is helping to build Greece’s ability to respond to wildfires by providing training to the Hellenic Fire Brigade, announced Premier Gordon Campbell today.

“British Columbia is fortunate to have a vibrant Greek community, creating strong personal and cultural links with Greece,” said Premier Campbell. “By sharing British Columbia’s expertise in fighting wildfires, as supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, we can strengthen our existing ties with the people of Greece, and help prevent future loss due to wildfire.”

The Province’s protection program will provide training to senior members of the brigade in aviation management and wildland firefighting, through a grant from the charitable Stavros Niarchos Foundation. In addition, the Province has made a modest donation of surplus equipment, such as shovels and water tanks, to the brigade. As well, Delta-based SEI Industries Ltd., a world-leading manufacturer of aerial firefighting equipment (including the famous helicopter Bambi Bucket), has also donated some firefighting equipment to Greece. The cost of the shipping was covered by Natural Resources Canada.

The relationship between the Province, the foundation and the Hellenic Fire Brigade began in 2007, when the foundation hosted a workshop in Athens to provide local authorities with access to Canadian expertise in wildfire management and economic development. Simon Fraser University’s Hellenic Studies department assisted the foundation by co-ordinating the delegation, which included provincial government staff, along with members of its own faculty and other organizations.

“During the summer of 2007, devastating fires shook Greece, claiming the lives of 76 people and destroying thousands of hectares of forests as well as villages,” said John Zervakis for the foundation. “The board of directors of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation reacted immediately to this disaster and set aside funds to be used in helping prevent such catastrophes from reoccurring. It is our aspiration that, as a result of this training, the members of the Hellenic Fire Brigade will be better equipped to combat forest fires in the future.”

“I am delighted that Simon Fraser University, through its Hellenic Studies program, has played an important role in establishing this unique relationship between Greece and B.C. and is providing vital programming that will enhance the ability of the Hellenic Fire Brigade to fight devastating wildfires in Greece,” said Michael Stevenson, president of Simon Fraser University.

Since the early 1990s, B.C.’s wildfire protection program has participated in international co-operation projects in more than 30 countries in Europe, Australia, Asia, Africa and Central and Latin America. Developing relationships with the global fire management community also helps to build B.C.’s own expertise and knowledge.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation is online at [www.SNFoundation.org](http://www.SNFoundation.org).

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