Disaster Recovery in Alberta
Alberta: No Stranger to Disasters

2016: Wood Buffalo wildfire

2013: Southern Alberta flood

2011: Slave Lake wildfire

2000: Pine Lake tornado

1987: “Black Friday” Edmonton tornado
Wood Buffalo Wildfire - Response

Provincial State of Emergency Declared May 4

- Government of Alberta led response
- AEMA acted immediately, partnered with:
  - Municipal, provincial and federal governments
  - Regional Emergency Operations Centre
  - Critical stakeholders
  - Communities across Alberta and Canada

Level 4 emergency at Provincial Operations Centre

- Staffed 24/7
“Recovery begins on Day 2”
Provincial Recovery Framework

Response → Stabilization → Short-term Recovery → Long-term Recovery

GOA Coordination Lead
AEMA/POC
Wildfire Recovery Task Force
Business As Usual

Enable Coordinate Support Fund
Emergency Operations Centre
Local Community (lead)
Local Community (lead)
Local Community (lead)

GOA on-the-ground support
Field Officers
Recovery Coordination Team
Business As Usual

Pre-emergency Support
Emergency Support
Transition and Short-term Recovery Support
Enhanced Cross-Ministry Support
Routine Ongoing Support

Current state
Transition: Lessons Learned

• Stabilization:
  ✓ More emphasis on stabilization support
  ✓ More clarity on when transition occurs to enable better planning
  ✓ More practical support to communities

• Situational awareness
  ✓ Separate teams, different locations created challenges
  ✓ Need to increase awareness of Recovery personnel throughout the response phase
Recovery Pillars

Resilient Communities: Growth from Disaster

People:
- Housing
- Safety
- Psychosocial Needs

Reconstruction:
- Public Safety-Remediation & Reclamation

Mitigation
- FireSmart

Economy:
- Diversification

Environment
- Public Safety-Remediation & Reclamation
To date, the Canadian Red Cross has raised $319 million:

- Includes $30 million from Alberta government in matching funds.
- Government funding allocated to:
  - Community partnership grants
  - Supports for small business
  - Post-disaster long-term supports (i.e., health and research activities)
Lessons Learned

- Recovery begins on Day 2
- The transition doesn’t happen overnight—there needs to be some time for cross over
- We need to plan together for stabilization
- Situational awareness is critical
- Partnerships are absolutely essential for success

No two disasters are the same.
No two recovery plans are the same.
AEMA Summit 2016
Disaster Recovery
Objectives

• To briefly discuss key themes of recovery from a NOR-EX Engineering perspective

• To discuss the RMWB current situation and considerations
Who am I?

• Experienced executive with significant public safety leadership
• Former Deputy Minister ESRD during 2013 Southern AB Floods
• Managing Directory Alberta Emergency Management Agency including coordination of response and immediate recovery during 2011 Slave Lake wildfires
• Former Co-Chair of the Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management in Canada
• Led the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team as a Senior Officer in the Canadian Army for 13 months – 550 personnel with a $220M budget focused on rebuilding post-conflict
Based on collective experience within NOR-EX we have identified five key recovery themes that can have a dramatic impact:

1) Governance

2) Integration & Planning

3) Funding Management

4) Capacity

5) Execution
Municipalities require good governance to enable effective decision making during recovery.

Transitional governance model that allows a return from a state of local emergency to business as usual over the long term.
Collaboration must be achieved and managed between the Municipal and Provincial recovery plans and the many supporting agencies to achieve the best long-term outcome for the impacted community.

In the Town of Slave Lake, High River, and the Stoney Nakoda Nation, the Emergency Operations (response phase) stabilized before Recovery Operations were ready to take over.
Key Recovery Themes – Funding Management

• Clear and concise communication channels must be developed and implemented to obtain recovery project funding approval and confirmation.
• The window for extraordinary funding requests will not remain open indefinitely.
• Funding Governance model - Authority/Process/Implementation.
Typically Municipal staff are at capacity with normal responsibilities.

Recovery requires dedicated, long-term effort.

Recovery task force structures vary.

The bookends for organizational structures are:
- A clearing house model; and
- Stand-alone recovery task force.
Key Recovery Themes - Execution

- Careful project management is crucial to ensure all recovery activities are identified, evaluated, approved and implemented with efficiency and accuracy.

- Recovery project planning must maintain alignment with overarching Recovery Plans.

- Authority matrix to approve and execute must be developed and clear.
Wood Buffalo Recovery Committee & Task Force

• Established by Municipal Bylaw 16/013 on June 23, 2016
• Task Force Leader
• Staffing (municipal and private sector)
• Embedded agencies
Planning Hierarchy

- WHAT success looks like

Strategic / No Change

WHO will be responsible for what and HOW it will be managed

2016 RMWB WILDFIRE RECOVERY PLAN

WHO will do it, HOW it will be done, and WHEN it will be done

Detailed Plans and Activities

Tactical
Campaign Plan

• Over-arching guideline for the implementation of the five pillars of recovery
• Creates a common understanding of the entire recovery process
• Answers the question ‘how do we recover’
**RMWB 2016 Wildfire Recovery Campaign Plan**

**The Primary Question:**
How does the RMWB recover from the 2016 wildfire in a timely manner while maintaining the confidence of its residents, restoring community engagement including indigenous voices, and setting the conditions for a region that is economically and environmentally sustainable for the pre-disaster conditions?

**Key Action Areas:**
- **People**
  - Enhance the well-being of all RMWB residents.
  - Ensure our children have access to quality education throughout recovery.
  - Ensure all have the opportunity to actively participate in locally organized leisure, sports, and recreational activities.
  - Provide opportunities for the region to gather and celebrate our spirit, pride, and resilience.
  - Promote mental support through the implementation of a robust, community-based recovery plan focused on resilience.
  - Ensure residents are engaged and well-informed.

- **Environment**
  - Ensure and remediate the environmental impacts of the wildfire.
  - Enhance the safety of our residents while promoting strong environmental stewardship.
  - Implement a process to identify, assess, remediate, and reforest the wildfire affected areas.
  - Enhance the public’s awareness of waste and debris generated by the fire while seeking opportunities to capture and recycle materials.
  - Recognize and actively promote the development of green spaces.
  - Seek to implement transformative opportunities during the rebuild that better enhance the environment of the RMWB, such as a carbon neutral community.

- **Economy**
  - Recoveregional economic activity:
    - Enable businesses (urban, rural, and indigenous) as they return and recover from the consequences of the wildfire.
    - Support oil and gas industry and related business within the RMWB by minimizing wildfire impacts on the local workforce.
    - Maximize the long-term economic benefits of recovery operations to the RMWB business community.
    - Restore and enhance our ability to provide regional services and programs.
    - Seek diversification opportunities as part of recovery.

- **Rebuild**
  - Recovery Best Practices:
    - Recovery demands local leadership.
    - Recovery is a wholesome community effort.
    - Kick-off recovery in parallel to response.
    - Designate the recovery lead.
    - Gather information to define the scale of recovery.
    - Establish a Municipal Recovery Team.
    - Accept ambiguity, work through the ‘grey’ together.
    - Identify external recovery stakeholders.
    - Support community recovery groups.
    - Establish planning and communications processes.
    - Establish financial procedures and processes.
    - Support people and promote self-care.
    - Reach out to communities, governments, and private sector personnel with recovery experience.
    - Think long-term recovery takes time and patience.

- **Mitigate**
  - Implement mitigation measures with a view to improving resilience.
    - Fully understand and mitigate any health risks associated with the wildfire.
    - Consider transformative opportunities that enhance recovery planning that better position the RMWB and all affected agencies.
    - Consider, identify, and implement opportunities for disaster risk reduction from an “all-hazards” perspective, effectively mitigating known risks to our community.
    - Examine potential agreements/options with a view to increasing safety, speed, and access during future disaster situations.

**Desired Outcomes:**
- **People**
  - All residents receive quality education in the region.
  - The environment is restored, with local, rural, and indigenous residents included in the planning process.
  - Recovery includes social, economic, health, and environment objectives.
  - Residents engaged and informed, supporting the recovery effort.

- **Environment**
  - The environmental impacts of the wildfire are minimized.
  - The region is restored with a focus on sustainable development.
  - Opportunities to increase the environmental impact of the region are reduced.
  - Innovative environmental initiatives are implemented.

- **Economy**
  - Our economy displays no lasting negative impact associated with the 2016 wildfires.
  - Economic opportunities for regional business and service sectors.
  - Localized and regional economic activity is supported by a robust business community.
  - Support for the Product and Disaster Recovery Program is maximized.

**End State:**
The RMWB has fully recovered from the 2016 wildfire. We are a safe, resilient community where a heightened sense of pride and spirit exists across the region. The residents and regional economy are sustainable. The environmental impacts of the wildfire are remediated.

**Risks:**
- Complications with insurance caused delays to recovery.
- The need for post-wildfire technology analysis delays the ability of the RMWB leadership to make informed land-use planning decisions.
- The pre-disaster economic downturn coupled with the impact of the fire on local businesses delays a full recovery of the region.
- The return to the region was delayed by unfavorable weather, uncertainty, or other factors.
- Insufficient local capacity to rebuild in a timely manner.
- A temporary increase in fly-in/fly-out of oil and gas workers becomes embedded in the new norm.

**Performance Indicators:**
- Regional population trends.
- Regional economic output levels.
- Long-term environmental impact.
- Confidence of our residents.
- Time to achieve whole of community recovery.
- Regional disaster risk reduction is improved from pre-fire levels.
- The health and well-being of our residents.
- The satisfaction of insurers with their claim payments.

**Narrative:**
The RMWB is recovering from a devastating wildfire that threatened the lives of our people and the very existence of our community. We suffered the loss of 17 residents with 18,000 homes were destroyed, as well as some public infrastructure. Many of our residents were evacuated for over one month while their homes were actually untouched for the duration of the fire. We live in a community that has a unique set of circumstances, a large financial resource, and a history of recovery. We will continue to support the community’s efforts to rebuild and improve our future. We will live in a community that has a diverse set of circumstances, a high level of resilience, and a strong commitment to recovery. We will rebuild and improve our future. We will support the community’s efforts to rebuild and improve our future.
Ongoing

- Recovery
- Work with Government of Alberta
- Disaster Recovery Program
- Leadership
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Planning
Key Considerations

• You are facing true complexity
• Relationship-driven
• Whole of community effort
• Local leadership matters
• Resiliency
• Seize opportunities