



May 20, 2011

Emergency relief funding first step in recovery for wildfire evacuees

Those using services of evacuee reception centres should receive assistance first, says province

Edmonton ... Two disaster relief programs designed to meet the urgent housing and financial needs of evacuees of fires in the Lesser Slave Lake region have begun rolling out in Alberta evacuee reception centres.

“Many families will remember the effects of these unprecedented wildfires for the rest of their lives,” said Premier Ed Stelmach. “These programs will help them begin the first steps toward recovery.”

The estimated cost of the programs is \$24 million. Funds are part of the province’s \$50-million relief program to meet the immediate needs of evacuees and to rebuild Slave Lake and surrounding communities. They were designed by the Premier’s Deputy Minister Task Force charged with designing, co-ordinating and administering disaster relief.

To help Albertans pay for costs as a result of being evacuated from their homes, individual adult evacuees will be eligible to receive \$1,250, and children under 18 will be eligible for \$500.

“Our priority is people who are relying on evacuee reception centres. We want to help them start building the next phase of their lives as soon as possible,” said Thomas Lukaszuk, Minister of Employment and Immigration.

For those Albertans who cannot find and cannot afford temporary housing, a new program will help place people and cover up to 100 per cent of their housing costs until the end of August. Evacuees will then be assessed individually to determine their ongoing housing needs.

“We created the Emergency Accommodation Plan for the people who are most in need as a result of this disaster-evacuees who are uninsured or have limited resources to meet their housing needs,” said Jonathan Denis, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Eligible Albertans can receive both financial and housing assistance effective today. To ensure relief is first provided to those most in need, people who do not require immediate assistance are asked to wait until at least next week before applying.

Canadian Red Cross Alberta Provincial Director, Steve Armstrong said, “We all heard and

watched with dread when we saw friends, neighbours and fellow Albertans fleeing from the fury of Mother Nature as fires engulfed their communities. The Red Cross and the Government of Alberta are working closely together to ensure Albertans' needs are being met.”

To apply for the financial and/or housing assistance, Albertans must first register with the Red Cross at evacuee reception centres or by calling 1-800-565-4483. Those seeking financial assistance can then apply at the evacuee reception centres or at any Alberta Works office. Applicants for housing assistance can now apply to a housing provider at the evacuee reception centres. Government relief information and application forms are online at www.alberta.ca in the 'Slave Lake Recovery' section.

Assistance will be provided in evacuee reception and information centres in Athabasca, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Peace River, Valleyview, Wabasca and Westlock seven days a week between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. until further notice.

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Backgrounder: Slave Lake Wildfire Relief

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To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Slave Lake Wildfire Relief

Help us support those most in need first

- Applications will be accepted from May 20 until at least June 17. We expect that all evacuees will have time to register, apply, and receive their benefits within this time frame.
- To ensure that people most in need receive assistance first, we ask that those with other financial resources (for example, an interim payment from an insurance company) and accommodation wait several days so that we can first support people relying on the evacuee reception centres.

To receive financial assistance

- Adult applicants will be expected to provide proof of registration with the Red Cross, proof of identity, and proof of residence.
- Proof of registration with the Red Cross could include the yellow copy of the “Registration Card” if evacuees registered in person, the registration number if they registered by phone, or a newly-completed registration card available at evacuee reception centres.
- Proof of identity may include photo identification like a driver’s licence, passport, student ID, or employee ID.
- Proof of family connections may include health cards, marriage licence, birth certificates, or passports.
- Proof of residence may include a driver’s licence, car registration, insurance papers, lease or rental receipt, mortgage papers or any other reasonable documentation. The residence must be a primary residence and covered by the mandatory evacuation order in the Slave Lake area as confirmed by Alberta Emergency Management Agency.
- One person may apply for the entire family, but needs documentation for all family members.
- A person under 18 on May 15, 2011 is considered a child and qualify for \$500.
- Applications will be accepted until at least June 17.
- People who are not near evacuee reception centres can receive service through any Alberta Works office in the province during regular government hours.
- Offices are located in Athabasca, Barrhead, Blairmore, Bonnyville, Brooks, Calgary, Camrose, Canmore, Claresholm, Cold Lake, Drayton Valley, Drumheller, Edmonton, Edson, Fort McMurray, Grande Cache, Grande Prairie, High Level, High Prairie, Hinton, Lac La Biche, Leduc, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat, Olds, Peace River, Pincher Creek, Red Deer, Rocky Mountain House, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, St. Paul, Stettler, Taber, Vegreville, Vermilion, Wainwright, Westlock, Wetaskiwin, and Whitecourt.
- For information on office locations and hours, visit www.employment.alberta.ca/offices or contact the Alberta Supports Contact Centre at 1-877-644-9992 toll-free in Alberta (780-644-9992 in Edmonton).

To receive housing assistance

- The Emergency Accommodation Program is available to evacuees who are uninsured and/or do not have access to funds to provide for their housing needs.
- Evacuees need to register with the Red Cross, complete a Housing Needs Form and sign a declaration.
- Eligible Albertans will receive access to social housing, private rental market housing and

other housing options, such as post-secondary campus housing. Applicants for housing assistance need to be assessed by a housing provider through the evacuee reception centres.

- Participants of this temporary program will be eligible to have up to 100 per cent of their housing costs covered until August 31, 2011. This includes costs related to damage deposits, hook-up fees, and basic start-up household expenses. Payments are expected to be made directly to landlords on behalf of evacuees.
- After August 31, 2011 evacuees will be assessed on an individual basis to determine their ongoing housing needs, based on their ability to pay for their portion of their lease rent, their income, employment status, and assets, and whether they are planning to return to their home community.
- Housing advisors will match the housing needs of evacuees with available housing.
- In working with evacuees and looking at their housing options, housing advisors have identified three groups:
 - Short-term-need a place to stay until it is safe to return home. Red Cross is coordinating short stay accommodations
 - Medium-term-need a place to stay until their home can be repaired. This could take a few months.
 - Long-term-need a place to stay for a longer period of time because their homes were destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

Evacuee Reception Centre locations

- Athabasca Multiplex, #2 University Drive, (780-675-2967)
- Edmonton, 7515 - 118 Avenue (www.edmonton.ca, 780-442-5311)
- Grande Prairie, Muskoseepi Park Pavilion, 102 Street and 102 Avenue
- High Prairie, Gordon Buchanan Rec. Centre, 5409 - 49 Street
- Peace River, Misery Mountain Ski Centre, 10408 - 89 Street
- Valleyview, Memorial Hall, 4432 - 52 Avenue
- Wabasca, MD Hall, 910 Stoney Point Road
- Westlock Community Hall, 10711 - 104 Avenue (www.westlock.ca, 780-349-8744)

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