

August 3, 2011

Additional \$189 million allocated for rebuilding and disaster response in Slave Lake area

Slave Lake... The provincial government continues to support Slave Lake area municipalities through three more efforts focused on long-term rebuilding, municipal recovery costs and interim housing.

The Town of Slave Lake, the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River No. 124 and the Sawridge First Nation worked together to set priorities for their residents. The provincial government continues to support these priorities through:

1. A Regional Wildfire Recovery Plan (\$64.2 million) - to implement projects to focus on the long-term future of the communities and to help ensure the affected communities do not suffer long-term social, environmental, or economic disadvantages because of the disaster.
2. A Disaster Recovery Program (\$77.7 million) - to assist the Town of Slave Lake, Municipal District of Lesser Slave River No. 124, Hamlet of Red Earth Creek, Gift Lake Métis Settlement, as well as the Driftpile, Little Buffalo, Loon River, Sawridge, Whitefish and Woodland Cree First Nations with their infrastructure and emergency response costs. Municipalities and First Nations that provided evacuation reception centres will also be reimbursed.
3. An Interim Housing Project (\$47.1 million) - to ensure additional funding is in place to acquire, install and manage up to 350 interim homes for remaining displaced residents and families from both the Town of Slave Lake and the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River No. 124.

"While we continue to see many day-to-day successes, it is now time to take a long-term approach to making this area whole once again," said Premier Stelmach. "The joint Wildfire Recovery Plan is about helping the communities become stronger and more resilient than ever through infrastructure projects, FireSmart® incentives, a community ball diamond, health services, and business and financial planning services."

With this new support of \$189 million, the Government of Alberta has now allocated a total of \$289 million towards the Slave Lake area wildfire response to help return the area to pre-disaster condition.

"Getting our people housed in the community as soon as possible is a priority for us that we couldn't achieve without the strong support of the Alberta government," said Town of Slave Lake Mayor Karina Pillay-Kinnee. "Town Council is committed to working alongside the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River and the Sawridge First Nation to implement this housing plan within a tight schedule."

“Such unprecedented disaster demands that we look at both the short-term and long-term implications,” said Hector Goudreau, Minister of Municipal Affairs. “Our efforts also extend to the neighbouring communities who took in displaced residents.”

“We are all working together to get these projects going as quickly as possible for our residents,” said Reeve Denny Garratt of the MD of Lesser Slave River. “We ask for everyone’s patience and understanding as we work to overcome challenges and deliver on our goal to rebuild our community.”

The three initiatives are in addition to a \$100-million government-wide response to the wildfires in northern Alberta. Assistance provided to date for residents, businesses and local authorities includes:

- Wildfire victim assistance;
- Business loans;
- Emergency accommodation;
- Essential worker housing;
- Security and clean-up; and
- 2011 residential property tax relief for homeowners who lost their homes.

“The long-term recovery plan will help the whole area get back on its feet,” said Winona Twin, a councillor with the Sawridge First Nation. “Knowing we have this kind of support gives the community a huge boost as we continue working to get the area back on track.”

The Executive Summary of the *Lesser Slave Lake Regional Wildfire Recovery Plan* is posted online at www.slavelakerecovery.com. Further details on the Disaster Recovery Program (DRP) can also be obtained at the same website.

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Backgrounder: Interim Housing Project schedule

Media inquiries may be directed to:

Jerry Ward
Communications
Alberta Municipal Affairs
780-427-8862

John Sparks
Communications Lead
Slave Lake Recovery Operations
403-660-8885

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Interim Housing Project schedule

The Alberta government has developed a comprehensive housing plan to deliver up to 350 interim homes for the residents of the Slave Lake area.

With the additional \$47 million, the government has allocated \$65 million to acquire, install and manage the homes on behalf of the Town of Slave Lake to allow families who lost their homes in the wildfires to return to the community as soon as possible.

The interim homes will be for the remaining displaced residents and families from both the Town of Slave Lake and the Municipal District of Lesser Slave River No. 124. The housing units may be used for up to two years or more, while occupants' homes are rebuilt.

Government is working to procure the housing units and has hired local contractors to begin clearing and servicing the sites. Some sites will be ready for housing units in September and others will become available in the coming months.

Of the approximately 730 households displaced by the wildfires, nearly 300 have found alternate accommodations through the provincial Emergency Accommodation Program or on their own. For the remaining approximately 400 households, the Alberta government is working to procure up to 350 interim housing units, which will include duplex units, to provide interim housing to approximately 400 households. Government is developing three parcels of land for these units and has hired local contractors to clear brush and bring in backfill to establish a base and help reduce the likelihood of flooding in low lying areas.

Services for gas, electricity, phone, water, and sewer also need to be installed before the interim housing units can be placed onsite. The delivery, set-up, installation and occupancy of the units will be staged over four to six weeks, through to the end of the fall season.

Interim housing schedule:

- Lot 78 (The Municipal Reserve lands south of the old ball diamonds between Highway 2, 6th Ave SW and Caribou Trail) should be ready for 102 interim homes starting mid-September;
- Lot 88 (Provincial Land east of Highway 88) should be ready for 140 interim homes starting mid-September;
- Land on the old slow-pitch diamonds near Caribou Trail and 6th Ave SW will be cleared and serviced for 94 permanent homes. Units will be ready for occupancy starting mid-November; and
- The remainder of the interim homes will be located within the Municipal District and ready for occupancy beginning later this month.

More information including a subdivision plan to show families where they will live will become available later in August and will be posted online at www.slavelakerecovery.com

On behalf of the provincial government, the Housing Coordination Office with the Lesser Slave Lake Regional Housing Authority is currently contacting approximately 400 households who lost their homes and still may need interim housing. The households are being contacted to confirm the number of family members and their housing needs, such as number of bedrooms.

The information will be used to order the appropriate interim housing and then assign the units to households based on their needs.

In general and in consultation with the Town and MD, priorities for the interim housing are first, families with school-aged children, followed by families with preschool-aged children, then couples and singles. Residents can move into units as they become available and will pay monthly rent based on pre-fire rates (\$1,000 for a two-bedroom, \$1,200 for a three-bedroom, and \$1,250 for a four-bedroom).

Residents not yet contacted by the Housing Coordination Office with the Lesser Slave Lake Regional Housing Authority by August 10th are asked to call the centre, 780-849-4505. As delivery dates are scheduled, the Housing Coordination Office will provide households with details on where and when they can move into the interim housing.

In the past five months, announced funding for housing assistance in the region now totals approximately \$76 million to assist about 550 households (around 180 households made their own arrangements). The funding is based on approximately:

- \$65 million for interim housing for about 400 displaced households. This includes \$9 million for the Town of Slave Lake to service a permanent manufactured home community on the old slow-pitch diamonds (near Caribou Trail and 6th Ave SW.)
- \$5 million for the Emergency Accommodation Program for about 100 households; and
- \$6 million for interim housing for the first 50 essential workers and their families.

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