

**Mayor's Report
September 9, 2019**

September 13 CEDI WORKING GROUP

- High Level has been designated as an evacuation centre for northern Alberta.
- Alberta Government will invest in training crews and developing capacity in fire prevention.
- High Level will receive a special team of four dedicated firefighters, funded for 18 months, looking at how to firesmart the community.
- The goal is to prepare High Level as a centre for evacuees, including building a shelter facility that will double as a recreational centre.
- High Level is looking to involve several partners, including the school district, Tolko, and the Dene Tha'. Want it to be a shared project.
- Dene Tha' expressed interest to have their crews trained to the same level as other crews, to be better prepared for local emergencies.
- The facility development does have an economic development aspect – makes the community more desirable for attracting people, business, etc.
- Aligns well with existing plans for fire preparedness in the region. If there is money for training, DT would like to be involved.
- Working Group agrees that top two priorities, given opportunities and relevance, are the water/sewer lines and the emergency preparedness
- Decision to postpone the tourism work with ITA until the spring or later, depending on progress on other project

September 15 NWSAR COMMITTEE MEETING

- That Administration develops a detailed response to the Draft Caribou Section 11 Conservation Agreement, for NWSAR Review.
- That NWSAR sends a letter to Minister Nixon in response to the Caribou Sub-Regional Task Forces news release.
- GOA Caribou Task Force Meeting September 18th @ 4:00 p.m. in Edmonton
- That NWSAR approves the attendance of Lisa Wardley, Crystal McAteer, Terry Ungarian, Jessica Juneau and Amber Bean, at the
- NWSAR develop a data sharing agreement with ABMI for Project 002, which includes the use of project data for PhD students
- Budget Discussion – Committee Member Updates
 - Town of High Level approved \$150,000 over 3 years
 - Clear Hills County approved \$150,000 over 3 years

- Mackenzie County approved \$150,000 in 2019
- Town of Rainbow Lake approved \$150,000 over 3 years
- County of Northern Lights Council approved \$150,000 over 3 years

September 18 Chris WARKENTIN MEETING

- One of the issues raised had to do with ensuring reliable high-speed internet service in northern Alberta.
- The limited internet infrastructure could have caused serious communications issues if it had been damaged or destroyed by the Chuckegg Creek fire.
- The issue is compounded by the fact that reliable high speed internet is needed to attract and retain business in the area.
- Chuckegg highlighted the need for more stable power infrastructure.
- Rail service continues to be a concern for the area, and the issue was raised with Warkentin.
- MP Warkentin said he would bring our concerns forward to Ottawa on behalf of the Town.
- Warkentin also expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the efforts made to save the community from the Chuckegg Creek wildfire.

September 18 RCMP MUSICAL RIDE

- Attended the musical ride, put on by the High Level Agricultural Society
- The event was extremely well-attended by the region.
- The riders put on a very good performance followed by an opportunity to meet the riders and pet the horses.

September 28 -29 FPAC-CPS FOREST FIRES SYMPOSIUM

The following is the information that I presented at the symposium. Detailed notes for the Symposium attendees will be compiled and forwarded in a report, which will include next steps.

1. **Ongoing investment is needed by the GOA and municipalities to advance processes and resources for disaster prevention, preparedness and overall emergency management.**
 - The largest wildfire prevention program is the **FireSmart Community Grant Program**, offered through Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, which provides municipalities with a level of support to identify and mitigate wildland-urban interface fire risks to their communities.
 - The program provides resources, plans, advice, workshops, and grant funding, as well as certification for municipalities. **(High Level received approximately 60,000 Firesmart and then in 2009 about 400,000 from FRIAA in 2009)**

2. The growth of disaster risk means there is a need to strengthen disaster preparedness for response, take action in anticipation of events, and ensure capacities are in place for effective response and recovery at all levels. (Something in my humble opinion people believe that this will never happen to their community

- Have an evacuation plan in place:
 - TOHL did have a plan and it took six hours to evacuate
 - We notified people of a **72 hour preparedness plan** via social Media, posters on doors of businesses.
 - developed after the "Williams Lake disaster
 - Should have included a plan for communication to evacuate Seniors, Homeless residents, pets, social housing, FASD housing.
 - Residents should have been notified prior to evacuation
 - Should have identified essential businesses prior to the fire. Those businesses should have been presented with the plan, Armbands; all of which would have.

3. Identify critical infrastructure:

- TOHL identified the two mills (**TOLKO and NORBORD**)
 - without the mills there would be little employment.
 - TOHL provided the contractors and sprinklered their mills at our cost.
- **Electrical Power**
 - One line coming south, one line coming from the west (Both compromised, without power for 36 hours)
- **Boyer River Tower**
 - hub for all internet and cell service in the Northwest as well as the NorthWest Territories. (Became ground Zero and protect at all costs)
- **Health Facilities**
 - regional hospital
 - operating facilities
- **Municipal Building**
- **Water and Sewer Infrastructure**

4. The recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase is a critical opportunity to build back better.

- GOA should develop guidelines to support local authorities in their creation of disaster resiliency strategies.
- These guidelines should help educate individuals, households and businesses to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters
- Foster connections between communities to adapt to future disasters.
- AEMA has identified High Level as the Regional Hub, so we need to now build Infrastructure and Facilities to accommodate for future disasters.

5. Enhance investment in public awareness and engagement initiatives for Emergency Preparedness. (WUI Team). This initiative should:

- use experiences from the Wildfire to create a change around the importance of emergency preparedness.
- work towards helping citizens understand their role their responsibility in emergency preparedness, and in being prepared to support themselves and those who rely on them, including children, adult dependents, and pets, on short notice.
- build knowledge among Albertans about where to access accurate and official information in an emergency.
- educate public awareness of the **Alberta Emergency Alert** program and how to register for alerts, social media accounts to follow, and how to use social media appropriately in a disaster.

6. Creation of resource and asset management system capabilities is essential.

The level of resource coordination required to manage this wildfire at both the provincial and municipal levels was huge.

- Identifying the right resources for a community is essential. (Fire Chief Schmidt, compiled a list of resources after Fort McMurray) and was able to mobilize those resources, manage them and demobilize them.
- with the and managing the receipt, support, and demobilization of resources.
- Resources who were deployed to High Level included AEMA (who were invaluable) the Incident Management Team, HIMI, additional municipal firefighters, Canada Task Force 2 (CAN-TF2).
- It should be noted that having a **local person help in Logistics was invaluable.** (This person should know where and how to locate any resources needed in the municipality).
- There was some confusion around communication and coordination about who was eligible to enter the Region after it was evacuated.
- A lack of information about who was allowed in and when, and wait times and rejections at the checkpoints were noted as a major frustration
- **The RCMP had to bring in Alberta First Responder Radio Communication System (AFRRCS) radios to communicate with municipal fire departments.**

6. Build depth and capacity within local authorities to enable communities to

Support each other during emergencies;

- Requirements should be in place for any persons selected for emergency operations roles to maintain a certain level of proficiency, such as maintaining a minimum ICS level and participate in a certain number of exercises each year.
- **Collective training exercises should occur between municipal first responders, and involve additional stakeholders such as industry partners, Indigenous communities, and potential service providers.**
- AEMA did a fantastic job in High level and should continue in its development of the Incident Management Team (IMT) and Incident Support Team (IST).
- Emergency management training should be funded at the federal level provincial and municipal level.

7. Mandate local authorities to adopt the Incident Command System model during

Response:

- Unified command was key and was successfully achieved during the first two weeks of the fire.

September 4

TRI-COUNCIL

- Regional SDAB and ARD report was tabled to the December Tri-Council meeting, where Administration will present some common forms.
- Announcement that Lisa Wardly would represent NWSAR and Crystal McAteer will represent AUMA on the GOA Caribou Task Force.
- The Secretariat will investigate the possibility of hosting the 2024 Summer Games.
- Administration will send a letter to the First Nations and Paddle Prairie to see if they are interested in participating in formulating a "Regional Emergency Management Bylaw."
- Letter to be sent to Fort Nelson to see if they are interested in meeting to discuss the possibility of a connector road.

September 5

GET-TO-KNOW-YOU EVENING

- Get-to-know-you night was well-attended, by people signing up their children for various clubs.
- CAO McKaskile and Bill Snarr represented the town and explained our new "Community Standards" bylaw and accepted all the feedback.

September 6

MEDIA RELEASE CEDI PARTICIPATION

- WE announced our participation in the Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI), a national program delivered jointly by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Council for the
- We are one of 9 partnerships in Canada to embark on a three-year First Nations-Municipal collaboration program. CEDI seeks to improve economic prosperity through joint community economic development and land use planning.

