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, the support of key stakeholders including Indigenous peoples, and setting the conditions for a region that is economically and environmentally superior to the pre-disaster conditions?

The following are associated components of the primary question:

- Decreasing the number of people who fly-in and fly-out of the region versus living and working within it.
- Enabling the return of our residents and attracting others to the region.
- Maximizing the opportunity to achieve increased resiliency.
- Stabilizing the economic downturn and diversifying economic opportunities.
- Rationalizing the quantity and location of infrastructure to better support the community's needs.

Recovery Best Practices:

- Recovery demands local leadership
- Recovery is a whole-of-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 municipalities, governments, and private sector personnel with recovery experience
- Think long-term: recovery takes time and patience

KEY ACTION AREAS / PRIMARY OBJECTIVES / DESIRED OUTCOMES

People

Enhance the well being of all RMWB residents:

1. Ensure our children have access to quality education throughout recovery.
2. Ensure all have the opportunity to actively participate in locally organized leisure, sports, and recreational activities.
3. Provide opportunities for the region to gather and celebrate our spirit, pride, and resilience through arts, culture and spiritual activities.
4. Provide emotional support through the implementation of a robust, community-based psychosocial recovery plan focused on wellness and resiliency.
5. Ensure residents are engaged and well informed.

Desired outcomes:

- All children receive quality education in the RMWB.
- The RMWB is a unified region, with all residents supportive of one another.
- Recovery increases the health, safety, and well being of our residents.
- Residents are engaged and actively supporting the recovery of their region.

Environment

Assess and remediate the environmental impacts of the wildfire:

1. Ensure the safety of our residents while promoting strong environmental stewardship.
2. Implement a process to identify, assess, remediate, and measure wildfire affected areas.
3. Ensure the proper disposal of waste and debris generated by the fire while seeking opportunities to capture and recycle materials.
4. Re-establish and actively promote the development of green spaces.
5. Seek to implement transformative opportunities during the rebuild that better the environment of the RMWB, such as a carbon neutral community.

Desired outcomes:

- The environmental impacts of the wildfire relative to air, land, water, and biodiversity are understood and remediated.
- Opportunities to minimize the environmental impact on the Region are seized during the recovery.
- Innovative environmental initiatives were implemented.

Economy

Reinvigorate economic activity:

1. Enable businesses (urban, rural and Indigenous) as they return and recover from the consequences of the wildfire.
2. Support oil and gas production within the RMWB by minimizing wildfire impacts on the local work force.
3. Maximize the local economic benefits of recovery operations to the RMWB business community.
4. Reaffirm and enhance our ability to provide regional services and programs.
5. Seize diversification opportunities as part of recovery.

Desired outcomes:

- Our economy displays no lasting negative impact associated with the 2016 wildfire.
- We have maximized opportunities for regional businesses to assist in the recovery of our community.
- Localized oil and gas production is supported by a labour force that resides in the region.
- Support from the Province's Disaster Recovery Programme was maximized.

Rebuild

Rapid reconstruction of our community to address and repair wildfire damages:

1. Understand and address the full extent of wildfire damage across the RMWB.
2. Enable the insurance and banking industries, Canadian Red Cross, and other agencies to effectively fulfill their roles.
3. Implement an interim housing plan to support the community through the reconstruction process.
4. Make timely policy decisions that enable reconstruction by removing obstacles and barriers.
5. Consider local workforce re-training to support reconstruction.

Desired outcomes:

- All wildfire damage has been repaired or remediated.
- Outside agencies fulfilled their role in the rebuilding of RMWB.
- Residents were able to live in the RMWB during the recovery process.
- Policy decisions allowed us to build back better.

Mitigate

Implement mitigation measures with a view to improving resiliency:

1. Fully understand and mitigate any health risks associated with the wildfire.
2. Consider transformative opportunities through land-use planning that better positions the RMWB from both public safety and future growth perspectives.
3. Consider, identify, and pursue opportunities for disaster risk reduction from an all-hazards perspective, effectively mitigating known risks to our community.
4. Examine potential egress/bypass routes with a view to increasing safety, speed, and access during future disaster situations.

Desired outcomes:

- Health risks associated with the wildfire are known, understood and effectively mitigated against.
- FireSmart and programs like it are explored and implemented where appropriate.
- Routes deemed to improve resilience are built.

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 resident population and regional economy are sustainable. The environmental impacts of the wildfire are remediated.

Risks:

- Complications with insurance cause delays to recovery.
- The need for post-wildfire toxicology 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 deters a full recovery of the region.
- The return of residents to the region was deterred by affordability, 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 and 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 insurees with their claim payouts

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 two residents while evacuating, thousands of homes were destroyed, as well as some public infrastructure. Many of our residents were evacuated for over one month while first responders bravely fought the fire and set the conditions for their return. We choose to move forwards, not backwards. We will rebuild once areas are safe. We will accommodate all families who want to move home as soon as possible. We will advocate for adequate community egress routes and a bypass to improve the safety and efficiency of our transportation network. Achieving these outcomes requires sound planning and strong governance. We will establish and empower a recovery task force led by Council. We will develop short and long term recovery plans that consider the needs and desires of our regional communities, industry, citizens and Indigenous peoples. We will create a roadmap to guide decision making and provide transparency and shared understanding of who decides what, when. We face a long and difficult road to recovery, but we face it together. We must work collaboratively, supporting one another, and caring for one another's mental and physical health. We see a region that is ready to bloom. We see a vibrant and tightly connected region where people want to stay and live an entire life.