

Road to Resilience – RMWB 2020 Flood Recovery Campaign Plan

Our Story

To date, 2020 is characterized by a unique combination of challenges for the residents of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB). These include:

- A collapse in global oil prices;
- State of Local Emergency (SOLE) declared for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; and a
- SOLE declared for the April 2020 ice jam flooding, which resulted in the evacuation of approximately 13,000 residents and damage to more than 1,200 structures.

Layered into the above is a sustained downward pressure on the regional and provincial economies as well as the enduring, historical impacts of flooding events in 1997 and 2013 coupled with the ongoing recovery from the 2016 Horse River Wildfire. These provide a backdrop of continued economic, social, and disaster risk to our region. In short, the municipality has experienced compounding and concurrent crises which have further reinforced the need for a comprehensive resilience program to foster long-term social sustainability within the region. The municipality should address the primary objectives within the Social, Built, Economic, and Natural key action areas described below to mitigate hazards that will continue to threaten the long-term viability of our region.

Campaign Plan Intent

The intent of this plan is to provide strategic, high-level guidance on a single-page, effectively orienting the reader to our community's flood recovery efforts. It creates common understanding of the disaster's impact and complexity amongst numerous stakeholders, aligns recovery efforts, supports coordination between numerous stakeholders, and highlights the need for coordinating the delivery of existing, related projects.

The plan reflects learnings from the 2016 Horse River Wildfire, historical flood events within the province, the ongoing development of the RMWB Community Resilience Strategy, and the changing policy landscape for disaster-related financial support. It is designed with the intent of positioning the RMWB to fully recover from the 2020 flood, while improving regional resilience for future generations. This Campaign Plan should be viewed in the following order:

Our Story. Describes the recent disaster and related challenges that the RMWB has experienced.

Key Action Areas. Represent logical groupings of tasks and projects identified during planning to effectively recover our community.

Primary Objectives. Describe the relevant objectives to achieve the desired outcomes.

Desired Outcomes. Represent the contributions of the four key action area towards the RMWB's goal of becoming a resilient community.

End-State. Describes how the RMWB envisions itself upon fully recovering.

Risks. Define events or conditions that could negatively affect achievement of the plan's end-state.

Key Performance Indicators. Measure progress of the flood recovery within the context of a pandemic and an oil price shock.

Recovery Principles. Proven principles to test recovery decisions and actions against.

Key Action Areas



Social

Enhance the social environment and support to regional governance:

1. Provide psycho-social support through the implementation of a robust, community-based plan focused on wellness and personal resilience.
2. Ensure residents are informed and positioned to make risk-informed decisions.
3. Enable effective engagement with First Nations and Métis partners.
4. Examine resilience strategies to reduce exposure and disaster risk for the vulnerable population.
5. Ensure all have the opportunity to actively participate in locally organized leisure, sports, and recreational activities.
6. Coordinate delivery of flood recovery with existing social sustainability endeavours.



Built

Enable effective reconstruction of our community, incorporating strategies to increase resilience:

1. Understand and address the full extent of flood damage across the RMWB.
2. Enable the insurance and banking industries, the Canadian Red Cross and all NGOs, as well as other agencies, to effectively fulfill their roles.
3. Implement an interim housing plan that supports the community through the reconstruction activities.
4. Make timely policy decisions that enable reconstruction to occur safely and efficiently.
5. Consider transformative opportunities for the RMWB from both a public safety and long-term land use perspective.
6. Consider, identify, and pursue opportunities for disaster risk reduction from an all-hazards lens, effectively mitigating known risks to our community.



Economic

Reinvigorate economic recovery and business resumption:

1. Enable businesses to recover from the consequences of the flood during the current pandemic.
3. Maximize local economic benefits of recovery operations to the RMWB business community.
4. Reaffirm and enhance government's ability to provide regional services and programs.
5. Seize economic diversification opportunities as part of recovery.
6. Coordinate the existing Downtown Revitalization and Downtown Area Redevelopment activities with flood recovery efforts.
7. Coordinate flood recovery efforts directly with the WBEDC to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes.



Natural

Assess and remediate the environmental impacts of the flood:

1. Ensure the safety of residents while promoting strong environmental stewardship.
2. Implement a process to identify, remediate, and assess the long-term health of flood-affected areas.
3. Ensure the proper disposal of waste and debris generated by the flood while seeking opportunities to capture and recycle materials.
4. Re-establish and actively promote the development of green spaces including maximizing their ability to mitigate the effects of overland flooding.
5. Seek to implement transformative opportunities during the recovery that better the natural environment of the RMWB.

Desired Outcomes

- RMWB-promoted inclusion of First Nations and Métis partners.
- Residents were engaged and actively supported, increasing the resilience of our region.
- Flood-related health and well-being impacts were effectively mitigated.
- Recovery was guided by risk-informed decision-making.

- All flood damage was repaired or remediated.
- Residents were able to live in the RMWB during the recovery process.
- Policy decisions enabled the RMWB to build back better, thus increasing resilience.
- Disaster risk reduction strategies were fully explored and implemented.

- Regional economy displays no lasting negative impact associated with the 2020 flood and pandemic.
- Flood-related financial impacts are mitigated.
- Opportunities for regional businesses to assist in the recovery of our community were maximized.
- Support from the provincial Disaster Recovery Program was maximized.

- Environmental impacts of the 2020 flood relative to air, land, water, and biodiversity were understood and remediated.
- Opportunities to minimize the environmental impact on the region were seized during recovery.
- Innovative environmental initiatives were implemented.

End-State

The RMWB has fully recovered from the 2020 flood, which occurred during an economic downturn and the COVID-19 pandemic. Risk-informed decision-making is integrated within all related programs and processes. We are a more resilient community that has reduced disaster risk from an all-hazards lens.

Risks

- Increasing likelihood of disasters.
- Changes to the flood construction level (FCL).
- Reduction in disaster recovery funding from Federal and Provincial governments.
- Pre-disaster economic downturn and pandemic deters a full regional recovery.
- Economic investment into our region is deterred due to energy sector uncertainty.
- Ineffective communications and public engagement.
- Ineffective recovery program management.

Key Performance Indicators

- Confidence of our residents.
- Community resilience levels as compared to pre-disaster.
- Vulnerability and exposure levels.
- Health and well-being of our residents.
- Regional economic output levels.
- Long-term impact to the natural environment.
- Processing and completion of the province's disaster recovery program claims.
- Duration to achieve community recovery.

Recovery Principles

- Do no harm.
- Increase community resilience: think long-term.
- Do not set the conditions for a repeat event.
- Understand the impact, complexity, and context.
- Focus on the well-being of the community.
- Maximize existing government support programs.
- Employ a planned and adaptive approach.
- Engage stakeholders and communicate in a transparent manner.