

The Fort McMurray & Wood Buffalo Region SPORT STRATEGIC PLAN





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wood Buffalo region (Wood Buffalo) has recently experienced unprecedented growth in the development of sport infrastructure, with the ability to encourage residents in the community to actively participate in sport and attract major sport events that can generate new business and help bring Wood Buffalo to Canada, and the world.

Over the past fifteen years, Wood Buffalo has hosted several significant sport events, including, most recently, the 2015 Canadian Ringette Championship and the 2015 Western Canada Summer Games – events with the potential to attract a large number of athletes, and their friends and family, all of whom can contribute to increased accommodations revenue and the economic impact created by longer stays.

These successes can be leveraged into a strategy for sport that will change the landscape for Wood Buffalo, and help contribute to a better way of life for residents. However, several key obstacles are currently barring the path forward.

Community leaders within Wood Buffalo agree that significant work is needed to bring all parties together before a plan of action can be successfully executed. Broad consultation identified several challenges to growth, including unclear roles and responsibilities, inconsistent communication among stakeholders, and uneven leadership.

This ten-year strategy is built on a phased approach that seeks to build trust and

engagement among stakeholders, and facilitate strong leadership, to build a true sense of partnership between sport development, including participation sport, sport tourism, and other key sectors. Working together, Wood Buffalo community members can effectively implement this plan for success.

This strategy has been developed with input from business and community members of Wood Buffalo, and a scan of international and national best practices. A thorough review revealed the Calgary model as an excellent model for the Wood Buffalo strategic plan. As in the Calgary strategy, the residents of Wood Buffalo will have a strong voice in the future of sport, advocacy for sport, and facility development; public policy will play a key role in success; and the system will be supported by a comprehensive information portal for stakeholders, parents, and participants. With tailoring for its specific environment and strong leadership to leverage existing resources, Wood Buffalo can use the Calgary plan as a framework for its own unique strategy for success.

As a truly integrated strategy, this is a landmark opportunity in Canada. The Wood Buffalo region can stand behind a unified vision and aligned structure to work proactively and ensure that sport is a major driver of growth in the region. If executed, and properly sustained, this strategy has the potential to set a new standard of excellence for communities across the country.



PLANNING CONTEXT

The Wood Buffalo region has undergone a period of significant growth over the last ten years, establishing a greater sense of community in the area. With a relatively young, well-educated, diverse, and prosperous population, Wood Buffalo has many factors in its favour. However, as the region grows up and the future of the oil sands evolves, there are also some major challenges ahead.

One of the ways that the region can leverage its assets, create a stronger community, and build for the future is through the business of sport. If done effectively, sport has the power to positively impact individuals and grow communities.

According to True Sport and Participation in *The State of Community Sport in Canada* (2014), "When community sport is based on the True Sport values of fairness, excellence, inclusion and fun, there are almost no limits to what sport can do...For communities, a thriving and positive sport culture helps reduce crime, supports newcomers, bolsters the economy, teaches youth valuable skills and life lessons, and brings people together."

In addition to its social value, sport is good business in Canada, with the gross domestic product (GDP) of sport industries in Canada in 2010 standing at \$5.2 billion, representing 0.3% of Canada's total GDP. In Alberta, the sport industry makes up \$620 million or 0.2% of Alberta's total GDP (*Statistics Canada: Economic Importance of Culture*

and Sport Across Canada (2010)). Sport in the Wood Buffalo region is currently at a critical point in its evolution. In late 2014 and early 2015, a preliminary study was commissioned by Fort McMurray Tourism and conducted by Grant MacDonald, Past Chair of the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, to determine how sport development and sport tourism might create positive impacts on the communities of Wood Buffalo.

Capitalizing on the recent development of over \$1 billion in sport and recreation infrastructure in Wood Buffalo and a 'perfect storm' of sporting events in 2015, the study identified an opportunity for the region to diversify its economy and enhance the way of life for residents. In fact, the community is poised for a period of new growth and opportunities through sport, if managed in a sustainable, measured way.

Based on input from members of existing sport groups and activities in Wood Buffalo, and the many organizations involved in bidding, planning, and executing sport events hosted in the region, this document provides the blueprint for the Wood Buffalo region to leverage that opportunity and become a leading sport region in Canada. The key to moving forward lies in the successful engagement and coordination of the region's sport community.

Though the sport development and sport tourism environments are very different,



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the two must work together to achieve the shared success the Wood Buffalo community is longing for. One issue they hold in common is the challenges associated with human capital. Like many regions in Canada, the success of sport in Wood Buffalo is currently dependent on a few key individuals who carry most of the load. Without clear, accountable leadership that can leverage professional and volunteer capacity, there is risk of a reactive, uncoordinated approach to sport.

Both sport development and sport tourism require leadership to move forward – it is essential for these two functions to work together strategically to better engage, inform and leverage the talent and assets of the region. This strategy details how the shift will be made to an integrated, engaged, proactive, and strategic approach to sport.

Adopting a cohesive approach to sport development and sport tourism, *The Fort McMurray & Wood Buffalo Region Sport Strategic Plan* is one of the first truly integrated strategies for sport in Canada, and the first sport strategy for the Wood Buffalo region. While it is built with a ten-year time frame, significant growth is expected over the first five years. With that in mind, a review period is not just recommended but required to ensure that the ten-year outlook is relevant and realistic. As stated in phase one of this project, the system that is built must enable sustainable growth for both sport development and sport tourism. Integration is essential to our success.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Wood Buffalo boasts many advantages that can be leveraged to support the strategy and achieve significant growth.

INFRASTRUCTURE

With over \$1 billion in sport infrastructure development, Wood Buffalo is competitively positioned to attract major sport tourism events, while offering members of the community access to a wide range of sport and recreation options. When combined with the services required to support high-performance sport, these venues can also create opportunities for training hubs so that athletes from Northern Alberta, or other parts of Canada, can train, learn, and excel in sport in the Wood Buffalo region.

The community's impressive sport infrastructure continues to evolve, with a number of new facilities coming online in recent months. MacDonald Island Park and Keyano College and Anzac serve as both community and event venues, as do other multi-use facilities throughout the entire region. As sport development and sport tourism continue to grow, leaders will need to balance community use and sport tourism business development, managing such issues as dislocation of regular users. New facilities, such as Shell Place, will also need to be programmed effectively to ensure that they are net contributors to community participation, sport development, and sport tourism.

Infrastructure in the region is supplemented by the recent development of the new terminal at the Fort McMurray

International Airport, which provides scheduled air access to the Wood Buffalo region from all parts of Canada. The Government of Alberta has also invested \$1.2 billion in the twinning of Highway 63 between Grassland and Fort McMurray to improve market access.

SPORT COMMUNITY

In spite of some frustration among stakeholders, there is a real longing for better communication and engagement from members of the Wood Buffalo sport community, and a strong will to change things for the better.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

The region is a dynamic community of over 120,000, attracting people from more than 100 countries around the world. It benefits from a comparatively young average population, with more than 32% of residents under the age of 25.

Just over 30% of residents hold a university degree, and 70% of household incomes are at \$150,000 or more, while almost 40% of people have kids under six years of age.¹

Wood Buffalo also boasts a vibrant arts and culture scene. From galleries to theatres to festivals, the region celebrates its distinctive culture and the diverse backgrounds of the people who live there. All of these elements serve to provide a unique sport experience that extends beyond the field of play.

There is a real longing for better communication and engagement from members of the Wood Buffalo sport community and a strong will to change things for the better.







Substantial community investments are being made in science and technology, literacy, youth leadership, aboriginal education and training, culture, health, recreation, and other areas.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Wood Buffalo is known as a generous community, with almost half of the population actively volunteering for community organizations and causes – more than twice the national average. The United Way has recognized the region as the most giving community in Canada for five consecutive years.

Leveraging this great generosity and community spirit through volunteerism can be a game changer for the region.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

The industry in Wood Buffalo is actively engaged in building the community's quality of life. Substantial community investments are being made in science and technology, literacy, youth leadership, and in aboriginal education and training, culture, health, recreation, and other areas.

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To fulfill the requirements of the strategy, both sport development and sport tourism require a broad base of leaders and volunteers with a high standard of professional skills.

THE CHALLENGE

There are some significant challenges within the Wood Buffalo region that, if not addressed, could become obstacles to growth and success.

LEADERSHIP

The absence of clear and consistent leadership in both the areas of sport development and sport tourism is a serious obstacle to growth. The realities of work scheduling and other commitments can be a limiting factor in engaging and retaining potential leaders in sport. In the sport development arena, there are also limitations on attracting high-performance coaches and officials, and the inability to retain them can impede the opportunity for sustained growth.

HUMAN CAPITAL

To fulfill the requirements of the strategy, both sport development and sport tourism require a broad base of leaders and volunteers with a high standard of professional skills. It is unlikely that the necessary tasks can be adequately performed, and accountability standards met, by existing personnel, without introducing burnout and disengagement.

GEOGRAPHY

The location of Wood Buffalo can be a barrier for provincial organizations that may want to keep travel costs manageable for athletes and families.

Incentives may be required to attract national organizations and their event properties. Once an event is awarded to Wood Buffalo, the physical size and sprawl of the region may limit the degree to which it can be equitably hosted in the communities that make up Wood Buffalo.

STORY

Brand story is essential to the success of any destination. Currently, the common Wood Buffalo narrative is not being shaped by its own residents. Most commentary about the region reinforces old stereotypes about the community, particularly Fort McMurray. It is typically characterized as a wild frontier town – a story that does not reflect the realities of living and working in the region.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The prominence of industry in the area, and the higher than normal influx of business travellers, raises the price of hotel accommodations in Wood Buffalo, which can be perceived as costly by those outside the region. When industry is on the upswing, the availability of rooms is frequently limited during the regular business week.

VOLUNTEERS

While Wood Buffalo is renowned for its great volunteerism, the people supporting the amateur sport system describe

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the experience as somewhat inconsistent. Volunteers can thrive when they are working in the right role, and some existing organizations excel at engaging people through participation and development. However, these successes are isolated and if a key volunteer leaves the sport or the region, it can have a downward effect on all participants.

DISENGAGEMENT

Currently, the sport community in Wood Buffalo is conducting business through a “siloeed” approach. There are many organizations working in, and contributing to, sport, however, there is a serious lack of communication among stakeholders and no coordinated approach to growing the sector. This is limiting the partnership and collaboration opportunities within the region and creating distrust and cynicism among potential collaborators. Inconsistent information sharing and communication is also causing a reactive approach among community partners and organizations.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to future growth is the lack of strategic and coordinated efforts between sport tourism and sport development. To overcome this challenge, clear and accountable leadership and management is required, along with a willingness to focus efforts on moving forward together.

An integrated approach, in which sport tourism and sport development work together toward common goals, would create significant opportunities for growth.





SPORT TOURISM

Sport tourism is defined as any activity that attracts people to a particular location as sport event participants, spectators, or sport attraction or business visitors. It can be a stabilizing force during times of volatility in the travel and tourism industry. In fact, in the wake of past economic and other world events, sport tourism has continued to deliver results, while other business and leisure travel has been negatively impacted. Sport tourism is, at its core, economic and community development. By generating export revenues in an economy, host destinations are able to increase their gross domestic product (GDP) and provide much needed growth through sales across multiple industry sectors and through the generation of tax revenues. Moreover, sport can support local businesses, engage residents, and help bring the visitor experience to life.

The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance (CSTA), the non-governmental organization that developed the widely-adopted industry standard model for projecting economic impact for sport events, has stated that sport tourism can:

- Stimulate economic, tourism, cultural, and social prosperity
- Add to the quality of life of local residents
- Showcase a positive community brand and image
- Provide enhanced exposure opportunities for a destination
- Build civic pride, an event hosting resume, and lasting legacies for the future

According to the CSTA, sport tourism is the fastest growing segment within

the tourism industry. Sport tourism in Canada is growing, with the most recent data from 2012 showing an increase of 5.3% in the value of visitor expenditures over 2011, and the total value of the sector surpassing \$5.2 billion CAD, according to data from the Travel Survey of Residents of Canada (TSRC) and the International Travel Survey (ITS).

Globally, sport tourism is a \$600 billion industry, and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) states that the global tourism market is projected to grow between 2 to 3% annually, while the sport tourism segment will grow by approximately 14%.

Destinations and host cities are increasingly looking to sport tourism to grow specific and measurable outcomes (or impacts) from hosting major sport events – to make them contributors to the community in a sustainable way. Sport tourism is a growing and highly competitive business, requiring proper resourcing, strategy, planning, and measurement. Host communities that do well in the sport tourism segment are investing resources to attract events, and leveraging them to increase benefits and awareness of the destination.

Currently, sport tourism in Wood Buffalo, like many other regions in Canada, can best be described as reactive, rather than proactive. There is no planned approach to the identification and attraction of events and, as a result, opportunities to attract visitors and generate significant economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits are frequently lost.





Sport tourism events are categorized in the following segments:

- Competitive single sport & multi-sport events
- Invitational events
- Created events
- Non-competitive events
- Professional sport teams
- Sport meetings, conferences and exhibitions

MAJOR EVENTS

Communities that invest resources in the development of new business through sport tourism are wise to focus their efforts on major events.

Major events can look different in each host city, depending on the size of the market and its readiness to serve as an event host. For the purpose of the *Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region Sport Strategic Plan*, the term “major event” implies a project that meets the following criteria:

- Attracts visitors from outside the host region
- Generates significant immediate and long-term economic, social, and cultural benefits
- Provides the platform for targeted and measured media coverage or promotion of Wood Buffalo outside the region
- Generates economic and other returns greater than the initial expenditure
- Serves as a catalyst for the development of spinoff activity
- Requires the use of significant event-ready infrastructure
- Engages residents of Wood Buffalo and positively impacts the pride of place and quality of life
- Has a measurable impact on the brand and reputation of the host community/region
- Provides lasting legacies

While major events offer great potential benefits, existing annual events should also be maintained and supported so they continue to provide opportunities for residents and other groups. Local events are the fabric of the community and serve to engage residents and promote participation in sport and recreational pursuits.

Alternatively, mega events, which require multiple levels of government and significant resources, should not be the primary focus for the community, due to the relatively low direct return on investment. These mega events are significant undertakings and will require proper financial and human resourcing to attract and execute.





| | AVG. | EVENT SIZE | EVENT ATTRIBUTES |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RMWB | 1 every 5 years | Mega | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RMWB lead organizer & funding body • Multi-sport type of event with government bid approval and financing • Multi-province and/or multi-week • Business attraction or performance motivation • National and/or multi-national media scope |
| Fort McMurray Tourism - Sport Tourism Committee | 2 every 10 years | Major A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Fort McMurray Tourism resources • National sport organization competitive bid process • 3+ day delivery • Business, performance or entertainment motivation • National media scope |
| | 5 every 3 years | Major B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Fort McMurray Tourism resources • Provincial/national sport organization competitive bid process • 2+ day delivery • Business, performance or entertainment motivation • Provincial media scope |
| WB Sport Connection | 30 per year | Local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local sport association funding with access to RMWB resources • Year-end or annual reoccurring type of event (no bid) • 1-3 day delivery • Community capacity and/or sport development motivation • Local/regional media scope |

To ensure efforts and resources are on target, major events are recommended to be the primary focus for sport tourism development in Wood Buffalo.

SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Sport development is the promotion of sports activities for the community and a major contributor to the social and emotional well being of the region. Successful sport development depends largely on effective partnerships and networking with a wide range of community groups, service providers, facility operators, national governing bodies, local authorities, and volunteer groups. In Canada, the responsibility for sport is a shared responsibility, with all levels of government playing a role. From health and wellness to economic and social development, it is widely agreed that sport strengthens communities along with our economy and society.

As positioned by Heritage Canada (Sport Canada), our country is a "leading sport nation influenced by a number of factors, including our four seasons and our geographical and social diversity." Our national sport system is designed to allow for participation by all Canadians, regardless of age or ability, which allows us to build healthier, more engaged communities.

The Canadian Sport Policy (2012-2022) aims to increase the number and diversity of Canadians participating and advancing through sport through five objectives:

- Introduction to sport – fundamental skills
- Recreational sport – sport for fun, health, and social interaction
- Competitive sport – improving and measuring performance in safe and ethical competition
- High performance sport – achieving world-class results through fair and ethical means
- Sport for development – a tool for

social and economic development and the promotion of positive values

The Canadian Sport for Life movement has increasingly impacted the ways in which sport and physical activity are developed in Canada, with a focus on quality. This approach links sport, education, recreation, and health from the community level through provincial and national programming. This long-term athlete development (LTAD) guides the participant experience from infancy through adulthood.

According to *Going the Distance: The Alberta Sport Plan (2016-2026)*, Alberta's vision is to be "the national leader in sport, with a coordinated and adaptive system that promotes excellence and fosters opportunities for life-long participation for all Albertans."

The Alberta sport system is defined as having the capacity to:

- Be recognized and valued as a key contributor to Albertans' quality of life
- Be cohesive and aligned
- Have increased capacity across the entire sport system
- Invest in sport at all levels and increase opportunities for all Albertans to participate in sport
- Increase the number of Albertans participating in programs and activities in the developmental, competitive, and recreational sport environments
- Have a great number of local, provincial, national, and international sporting events hosted in Alberta

Through the various community and volunteer organizations that deliver sport programming in Wood Buffalo, the region

has an opportunity to play a leadership role in supporting Alberta's vision and aligning with *The Canadian Sport Policy 2012*.

Communities across Alberta and Canada are developing and implementing needs-based sport delivery systems. These models are designed to increase participation and excellence, while ensuring supports and delivery systems are in place for the full spectrum of development, participation, and excellence.

Under its current system, sport development in Wood Buffalo is highly resource dependent; its ongoing success may be too reliant on a sport leader, coach, or volunteer being in the right role at the right time. Communication can be challenging, and delivery is inconsistent due to the unique work situation in Wood Buffalo.

Within the sport system in Wood Buffalo, as in most communities in Canada, sport organizations are primarily volunteer-led and self-governing. Due to the reliance on volunteer resources, they have varying degrees of expertise and continually reshape their programs based on available talent. For the purpose of this exercise, sport organizations have been categorized as Tier I, II, or III according to three primary criteria:

- 1) Capacity and ability to run their sport organization;
- 2) Capacity and ability to develop their sport from participation through to development and graduate athletes, and coaches and sport leaders to high performance sport; and
- 3) Capacity to lead bids for major provincial and national events and technical expertise to effectively plan and stage these events.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This strategy was created with the direct input of individuals and organizations with vested interest in building sport in the Wood Buffalo region. The first phase of strategic planning for this project was detailed in *A Strategic Approach: Sport Tourism and Sport Development - Fort McMurray & the Wood Buffalo Region*. The report outlined key themes generated from broad consultation with local community leaders. Those themes included:

- Creative solutions to move forward and combat geographic realities
- Agreement that sport events can bring new business and engage the community
- Support for the economic and social potential for sport in the region
- Better alignment and communication among community members
- The need to own and reshape the Wood Buffalo narrative
- The importance of measurement to inform decision making and accountability

With support for phase one of this project, a mandate was issued to develop a ten-year strategy that would allow the region to set a new vision for the future and work collaboratively toward the identified goals.

This second phase of planning included an environmental scan of best practices from other jurisdictions, as well as further collaboration with community leaders. Outreach was conducted with a wide range of individuals and organizations through in-person focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and an online survey to invite further input on the direction of the strategy.

The results of the consultation were consistent and clear. The Wood Buffalo region requires a strategy that will facilitate greater collaboration, communication, engagement, leadership, and accountability, and allow the community to leverage the significant benefits of sport development and sport tourism for the benefit of all.

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MISSION

To engage and align the sport community, tourism industry, stakeholders, and users in fostering a strong sport delivery system that attracts new business and visitors, and improves the quality of life for residents.



VISION

A potential vision for this strategy has been much discussed among stakeholders. The vision 'Wood Buffalo will be the sport capital of Canada' was suggested as one possibility. While this vision is inspirational in its scope, significant consultation with stakeholders revealed that it is not something they can support or believe in, given the realities and challenges Wood Buffalo faces. Feedback generally concluded that this vision was not realistic.

To meet the objectives of this strategy, with the ultimate goal of unifying stakeholders behind one aspirational vision for the future, the following is recommended.

Wood Buffalo will be the future of sport in Canada.

When people talk about sport in Canada, they will be talking about Wood Buffalo. We are pioneering an innovative way of doing business that will lead the transformation of our sport community.

We will be nationally recognized for our high level of engagement, outstanding leadership, open, transparent communication, and our seamless integration of sport development and sport tourism goals. Our vision represents a sporting community that is fiercely proud of its unique attributes – our beautiful, northern landscape, our state-of-the-art infrastructure, and our can-do spirit.

As a coordinated, highly-effective team, with mass participation from all parties, we will work cohesively toward clearly defined outcomes, leveraging our financial and human resources, expertise, and facilities as efficiently as possible to realize our objectives.

We will be a passionate team of ambassadors, sharing our clear and authentic Wood Buffalo brand story with the world, secure in the knowledge that our invitation will result in unforgettable experiences for our visitors. Our residents and athletes will be the biggest winners of all, benefitting from our culture of success.

Regardless of our perspective, position, or sector, we will each hold the growth of our community as paramount. We will continue to consistently measure our success, hold ourselves accountable to established, reliable criteria, share the results, and integrate the learning. Above all, we are focused on partnership and collaboration as the ultimate means to our shared future success.

We will be a passionate team of ambassadors, sharing our clear and authentic Wood Buffalo brand story with the world.

STRATEGIC GOALS

While this is a ten-year strategy, designed to align with the Alberta Sport Plan for 2016 to 2026, significant growth is expected over the first five years. As previously stated, a review period is not just recommended but required to ensure that the ten-year outlook is relevant and realistic. Therefore, ten-year and five-year goals are outlined below.

LONG-TERM (2026) STRATEGIC GOALS:

- We offer a well-coordinated, participant-centred sport delivery system. Residents and athletes can understand and access the on-ramps to participating in sport, and a higher percentage of them are using the full range of our offering.
- We are leveraging our existing and future investments in sport facilities and infrastructure to anticipate and exceed the needs and expectations of residents, visitors, business, and athletes, and to ensure sport and sport events are contributing to the growth of the Wood Buffalo region in alignment with municipal plans.

SHORT-TERM (2018) STRATEGIC GOALS:

- We take a coordinated, collaborative, and accountable approach to attracting and hosting events, as evidenced by the success of our partnerships, our seamless event process, and our consistent, transparent measurement.
- We are hosting more major events that attract new business and visitors, and inspire more residents to actively participate in the community.
- We have a clearly defined approach to ensuring ongoing, inclusive consultation and collaboration with representatives of arts and culture, events and tourism, and other important sectors, recognizing the need for all to be aligned.



THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

VISION: WE WILL BE THE FUTURE OF SPORT IN CANADA

COMMUNICATION

PEOPLE

- Leadership
- Stakeholders & partners
- Volunteers
- Professional development

RESOURCES

- Integrated approach
- Financial support
- Information portal
- Facilities
- Technical standards
- Equipment

COMMUNICATION

- Brand
- Value of sport
- Tell the story

DEVELOPMENT

- Participant-centred
- Participation sport
- Major events
- Grow business
- Customer-focused

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Clear measures
- Outcome-based
- Legacy
- Risk and issue management

2018 PRIORITIES

- A coordinated, collaborative and accountable approach to attracting and hosting events
- Hosting more major events that attract new business and visitors, and inspire more residents to actively participate in the community
- A clearly defined approach to ensuring ongoing, inclusive consultation and collaboration

2026 PRIORITIES

- A well-coordinated, participant-centred sport delivery system
- Leveraging our existing and future investments in sport facilities and infrastructure to anticipate and exceed the needs and expectations of residents, visitors, business and athletes, and to ensure sport and sport events are contributing to the growth of the Wood Buffalo region.



TIMING

Due to the number of decisions and resources that will be required to ensure full implementation and the ultimate success of this strategy, the time measures are aligned with the funding from RMWB and the RMWB Strategic Plan.

- Short Term (2016-2018)
- Mid Term (2018-2020)
- Long Term (2020-2025)



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Fort McMurray & Wood Buffalo Region Sport Strategic Plan is built on five pillars for growth.

People

Objective:

We will clarify roles and responsibilities within the region so each individual and organization understands how they will support the strategy.

The structure for sport will be clear and promote high levels of strategic thinking and operational excellence

- Wood Buffalo Sport Connection will serve as the lead agency for development, advocating for sport and capacity impacts. It will support growth at all levels, including participation, high performance, and development
- Fort McMurray Tourism, in consultation with the Sport Tourism Committee, will form the lead agency for sport tourism. Serving as the advocate for the business of sport, it supports major sport event hosting, manages required partnerships at the provincial, national and international levels, and plans and executes business development and marketing in pursuit of growth
- Identify and engage community sport champions who can advise, support, and endorse sport in the region, and attract high-performing coaches, officials, sport leaders, and volunteers

Proactive partnership and stakeholder engagement will facilitate greater alignment and coordination

- Capture and communicate the business case for sport development and sport tourism to increase awareness and appreciation of the value of sport
- Enable opportunities for community sport champions to promote the value of sport in the region
- Identify integration and alignment opportunities with other organizations and strategies including, but not limited to:
 - RMWB Municipal Development Plan
 - RMWB Strategic Plan 2015-2017
 - Fort McMurray Tourism Strategic Plan (2011-2021)
 - Regional Recreation Corporation Strategic Plan
 - Going the Distance: Alberta Sport Plan (2016-2026)
 - A Pathway to Growth: Alberta Tourism Framework (2013-2020)
 - RMWB Active Living Strategy (2016-2018)
 - Regional Indoor Recreation and Facilities Master Plan (2015)

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A region-wide volunteer program for sport will build capacity and create a thriving, self-sustaining community

- Develop an integrated online registration and information hub for volunteers in sport development programs and sport tourism events
- Create or purchase a volunteer management database to effectively administer a year-round program within the hub
- Develop recruitment campaigns on a quarterly basis
- Provide standards for volunteer organizations to ensure the safety of all participants and a positive volunteer experience, including a requirements map
- Establish a volunteer recognition program and other opportunities for appreciation

Our sport culture will build knowledge capacity for all volunteers and professionals

- Develop “Home Team Wood Buffalo” for information sharing on in-season sport activities or upcoming sport tourism events within the hub
- Conduct a gap analysis on coaches, officials, and sport leader requirements to develop and maintain a ‘live’ database within the information hub
- Through a funding matrix, provide access to training and certification
- Support professional or association affiliations or memberships
- Develop a succession plan for key roles to ensure continuity and advancement of sport

Resources

Objective:

We will build the necessary structure to support the strategy and ensure the required resources are in place to achieve success.

An integrated approach to sport will allow for greater, more rapid, growth

- Develop practices and operating procedures, and designate resources, to enable sport development and sport tourism to work together in a proactive and collaborative way

The financial resources we allocate to sport will reflect the contributions that sport development enhancement initiatives and sport tourism make to the economic, social, and cultural growth of the region

- Establish sustainable annual operating budgets for sport development and sport tourism that enable projected and targeted growth
- Create a diversified set of revenue streams that are sustainable and see financial legacies reinvested in sport

The comprehensive information hub (see above) will serve as a landing point for all residents, regional organizations, and external audiences

- Develop an intranet that allows sport partners and stakeholders to effectively share information around scheduling, opportunities, and resources
Based on the ease of use, relatively low cost of implementation, and use by Canada Games, Government of Alberta and the project team for this project, SharePoint is recommended
- Build a digital presence for the

sport industry and rights holders to position the unique value proposition of Wood Buffalo

- Develop a consumer-facing, integrated sports, entertainment, and lifestyle portal (within hub), delivering world-class sporting and entertainment events

Our facilities will balance the needs of residents and regular user groups with major events for the benefit of the entire region

- Develop standards and procedures for displacement of other business or dislocation of regular users
- Develop a plan by facility with an acceptable range of preferred number of event days
- Develop business case practices for facility development and major event attraction

We will strive to align our facility assets with technical standards for sports and major events

- Conduct a facility technical specification assessment based on Alberta and national sport organization standards
- Develop gap analysis for technical specifications specific to target sport event bid opportunities

We will capitalize on all existing equipment resources to enable the growth of sport

- Assess equipment assets to support all sport programs and sport events
- Identify equipment requirements to enable the growth of sport at all levels and host provincial, national, and international sport events

Communication

Objective:

We will create and share Wood Buffalo's authentic, compelling story to excite and attract our target audiences.

The Wood Buffalo brand for sport will connect with target audiences and create conversions

- Create brand and implement marketing communications strategy for external audiences, including rights holders for sport events, meetings and conferences, participants, friends and family, and media

All stakeholders will know the value of sport and will be able to share this story

- Create a communications strategy for internal audiences, including sport groups, facility operators, tourism representatives, airport staff, accommodations operators,

restaurant and bar staff, volunteers, arts and cultural organizations, all residents, etc.

- Develop standards for reporting by event, by season, and/or year

We will proactively tell the Wood Buffalo story

- Determine the brand activation for sport tourism events
- Develop the key messages for the sport community, sport development, and sport tourism
- Create opportunities to tell this story to internal audiences (within RMWB) and to external audiences (Alberta, Canada, and international)
- Create processes for regular and ongoing communication and information sharing with rights holders and potential customers



Development

Objective:

Sport will be a source of significant economic and social growth in the region.

Sport development will be participant-centred, with a focus on broadening the range of opportunities and growing the number of active participants

- Empower and advocate growth of participation-based sport by promoting Canadian Sport for Life and providing equitable access for all residents of the region
 - Develop specific programs and events for under-represented groups including:
 - ~ Girls and women
 - ~ Aboriginal people
 - ~ Disabled or “para” sport participants
 - ~ At risk youth
 - ~ Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) participants
 - ~ Masters or seniors
 - ~ New Canadians
- Promote **Development** sport by providing athletes with access to quality programs and activities at all levels
 - Ensure supports are in place to advance their skills and competitive experiences
 - Recruit trained, skilled, professional coaches who have access to professional development and advancement
 - Provide quality officiating at the competitive levels
 - Deliver competitive opportunities at home and support to compete within Alberta and throughout Western Canada
- Enable **High Performance** sport
 - Ensure facility access for training and competition
 - From the Alberta Sport Development Centre Northeast through to provincial and national team programs, promote seamless access for athletes, coaches, and officials to sport science and other supports required to train, compete, and officiate at the highest levels of sport in Alberta, Canada, and internationally
 - Integrate high-performance opportunities with sport hosting plans so Wood Buffalo and Alberta athletes can compete at home, with home field advantage
 - Investigate potential for hosting high-performance training and competitive programs in Wood Buffalo

Wood Buffalo will attract and host major events that bring visitors and profile to the region, while developing new business and diversifying the region's economy.

The region will attract and host:

- Five or more provincial single-sport events per year
- One provincial multi-sport event every 3 years
- Three to five national single-sport events per year
- One national multi-sport event every 5 years
- One international single-sport event every 5-8 years
- One international multi-sport event every 10 years
- Develop sales and marketing plans for sport tourism events, and the associated visitors, that achieve objectives of seasonality, venue and organizational readiness, and financial capacity

SPORT STRATEGIC PLAN



- Ensure all required technical and sales resources are in place for bid processes, site visits, and planning for major sport events
- Target events by sport or segment using an 'escalator' approach that targets a long-term goal, and the gradual and incremental events that will build capacity toward the ultimate objective
 - Align target events with event-ready facility infrastructure, priority segments, or based on the development of specific sports

The region will grow business from sport in the local economy

- Develop an 'open for sport business' program to support information sharing and advanced planning
- Develop a sport tourism activation plan to proactively promote packages and unique experiences in Wood Buffalo
 - Training camps
 - Spinoff events
- Examine the potential for a 'sport business club' to centralize information on the goods and services requirements for sport and connect it with local suppliers

Sport development and sport tourism will be seamless in the eyes of rights holders and potential customers

- Adopt and promote a united approach

Accountability

Objective:

We will plan for success, measure our progress, and hold ourselves accountable.

Sport development and sport tourism performance measures will be clear and applied consistently

- Establish relevant measures for priority impact areas
- Evaluate the performance of each sport program and sport event

Wood Buffalo will use an outcome-based approach to sport

- Develop consistent business case methods that inform decision making for sport tourism, sport development, and all partners and stakeholders
- Develop a scorecard for each event that will standardize the projected impacts so evaluation becomes more objective
- Conduct third-party, industry accepted and recognized post-event economic impact assessment models using survey data collected during events for national and international sport events that receive municipal funding of \$500,000 or more

- Conduct media valuations for national and international sport events

We will plan event legacies, from bid process to post-event wrap-up

- Develop planned legacy approach for each sport and community so that each event has the potential to provide lasting benefits to the region, including:
 - Finance
 - Infrastructure
 - Volunteers
 - Transfer of Knowledge for sport tourism and sport development

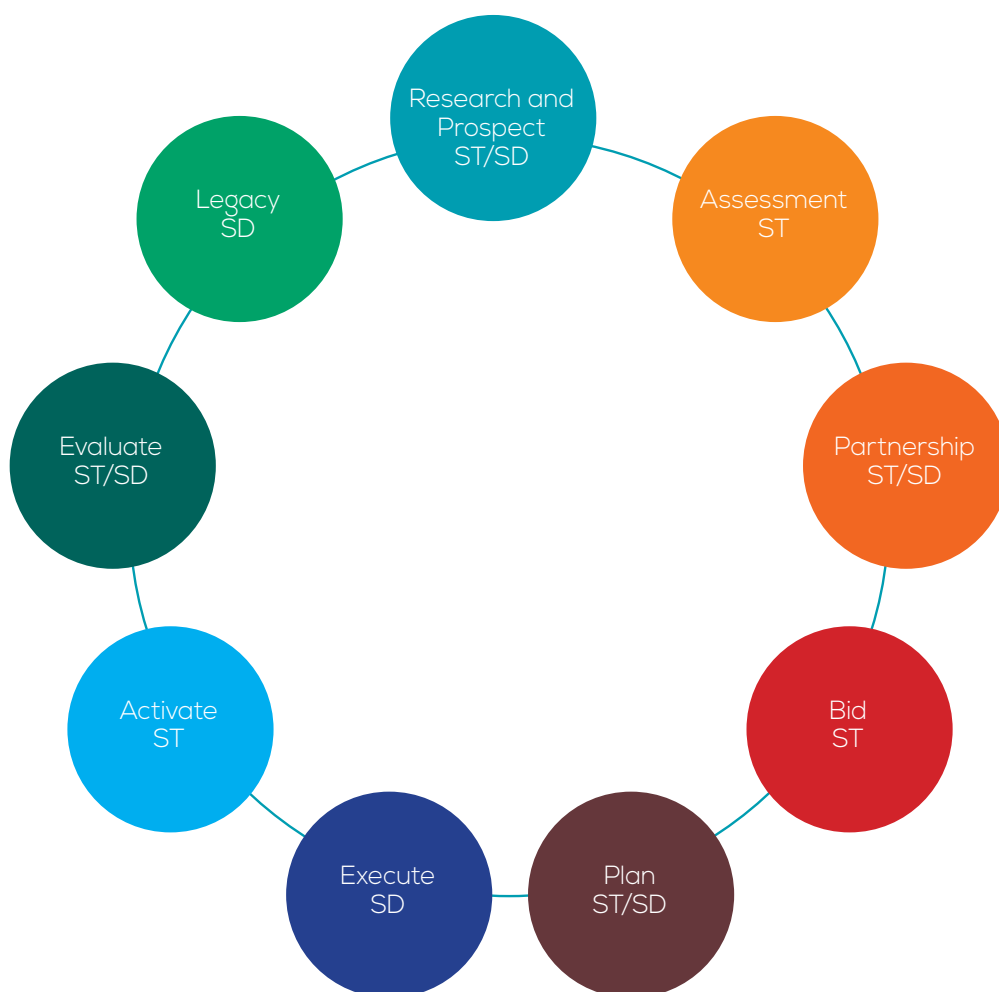
Risks and issues associated with sport development and sport tourism will be managed in a proactive and planned way

- Develop standard risk and issue management process for sport development and sport tourism, including all sport programs and sport events
- Conduct annual risk and issue assessment process for sport programs
- Conduct preliminary and pre-event risk and issue management process for all hosted sport events

THE WOOD BUFFALO SPORT HOSTING CYCLE

The strategy will result in the integration of all elements listed under the strategic pillars. The ideal system would be a cycle of success that would involve and benefit all stakeholders involved in sport development and sport tourism.

Key: ST=Sport Tourism SD=Sport Development





ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

| | GOVERNMENT | SPORT TOURISM | SPORT DEVELOPMENT |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lead | RMWB Government of Alberta Government of Canada | Fort McMurray Tourism | Wood Buffalo Sport Connection |
| Development phase | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public policy • Advocacy for community • Operational funding and support • Impact criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic - Social - Brand • Political support • Partner with industry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy (voice for sport events) • Research/prospect • Information hub • Business development • Impact based assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feasibility/ business case - Capacity - Seasonality • Partnerships (government, industry and community) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy (voice for sport) • Research/prospect • Partnerships (government, industry and community) • Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clubs - Athletes - Coaches - Officials • Sport development • High performance • Volunteers • Facility specs |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid assessment (project go/no go) • Bid project management • Bid communication | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid funding • Bid support • Mega and multi-sport Event bids | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid partnership development • Site visit planning and execution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid technical development |
| Execution Phase | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event funding • Financial guarantee • Facilities • Municipal services • Economic/business development • Community engagement • Community image building • Manage dislocation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport tourism communication • Event promotion • Brand activation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations planning • Technical lead • Sport promotion and recruitment • Transfer of knowledge • Sport development • Planned legacy |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic impact - Social/resident - Brand and media impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic impact - Visitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation - Sport Metrics |

SUCCESS FOR WOOD BUFFALO SPORT

With the successful integration of sport development and sport tourism, and delivery of the strategy, Wood Buffalo will bring together all partners and stakeholders, creating a highly-engaged, highly-functioning community that prioritizes sport as a valuable and sustainable means to creating prosperity, inclusion, and appreciation for the region.

We will take ownership of our success, and inspire new and current residents to value the way of life in Wood Buffalo by helping them actively participate and engage in our shared community through sport. Our work is helping to promote health and wellness and civic pride, and creating a culture of success

for our residents and athletes that attracts outstanding leadership.

New visitors and business from across the country are inspired by our major events and unique experiences.

Sport is recognized as a significant economic driver for our region. We have developed an innovative and sustainable way of doing business – a model that is being adopted by other jurisdictions across the country as the new standard.

Wood Buffalo is changing the landscape, starting at home, and we are excited to share our new story of success – we are the future of sport in Canada.



HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

The Wood Buffalo region will measure success and make decisions according to an outcomes-based approach, delivering impacts in the areas below. For 2016, the priority is to set baselines from which to generate appropriate targets for 2018 and 2026.

| CATEGORY | IMPACT AREA | MEASURE |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sport Development | Athletes | # first-time # registered # high performance Retention rate % |
| | Coaches | # first-time # registered Retention rate % |
| | Sport Leaders | # |
| Sport Tourism | Sport Event Bid Wins | # or % |
| | Events Hosted | # Regional # Provincial # National # International |
| Economic | Economic Impact | Sport Development/yr Sport tourism/yr |
| | Gross Domestic Product | Growth of new \$ |
| | Businesses Supported | # \$ |
| Tourism | Jobs | # supported |
| | Overnight Visitors | # |
| | Room Nights | # |
| Brand | Length of stay | Average |
| | Media Value | \$ |
| Social | Return on Investment | Ratio |
| | Volunteers | # Impact: Tier I, II, III Volunteer hours |
| | Pride of Place | Index |
| Culture | Quality of life | Index |
| | Entertainment | # performances |
| | Culinary | # local restaurants |
| | Aboriginal | % involvement |

APPENDIX

List of Contributors

All of Wood Buffalo's sport user groups were invited to participate in this process. The following community leaders provided input into the development of this document, either through a series of in-person sessions, one-on-one interviews, or anonymous surveys issued to stakeholders with a vested interest in Wood Buffalo sport.

2015 Western Canada Summer Games
Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association
Alberta Culture and Tourism
Alberta Sport Connection
Bowmans Martial Arts
Casman Centre
Fort McMurray Catholic School Board
Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce
Fort McMurray International Airport
Fort McMurray Mantas Swim Club
Fort McMurray Minor Football
Fort McMurray Minor Hockey
Fort McMurray Minor Soccer
Fort McMurray Monarchs - Adult Football
Fort McMurray Rowing Club
Fort McMurray Sno-Drifters Snowmobile Association
Fort McMurray Oil Sands Curling Club
Fort McMurray Ringette Association
Fort McMurray Tourism
Keyano College
Keyano College Syncrude Sports and Wellness Centre
Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo
Noralta Skating Club
Norfort Gymnastics Association
Northern Alberta Athletic Association (Oil Barons)
Northern Lights Triathlon Club
Oilsands Community Alliance
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Community Services Department
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Economic Development Department
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Mayor and Council
Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo
Suncor Energy Services
Syncrude Canada Ltd.
Tar Sand Betties
Wet and Wild Diving Society
Young Aquatic Club

