



Regional Board Report

Information

To: Regional Board
From: Acting Director, Engineering Services
Date: November 16, 2023
Subject: McDougall Creek Wildfire Resiliency Centre Summary

Voting Entitlement: *All Directors - Unweighted Corporate Vote - Simple Majority (LGA s.208)*

Purpose: To provide a final summary of the activities and accomplishments of the McDougall Creek Wildfire Resiliency Centre since its opening on August 31, 2023.

Executive Summary:

Following the McDougall Creek Wildfire Recovery Plan (2023), the Resiliency Centre has achieved important milestones since opening its doors. Staff at the centre reached out to approximately 300 property owners who suffered property loss to complete needs assessments, facilitate referrals and help wildfire-affected residents navigate the recovery process. Residents were primarily from within communities of Westbank First Nation, City of West Kelowna and Electoral Area West within the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO).

Major recovery-phase accomplishments include successful community outreach and ongoing collaboration between local governments and non-profit organizations. Overall there were:

- 84 unmet needs assessments completed
- 400 individuals and their families supported in the communities of Westbank First Nation, West Kelowna, and the Electoral Area West in the RDCO
- Over 700 referrals to other agencies for support such as gift cards for food, gas and housing.

Looking ahead, although the Centre will be closing on November 17, residents undertaking rebuilding of their homes are encouraged to work closely with their local jurisdiction. Staff recognize the long-term nature of post-disaster recovery doesn't end with the closure of the Resiliency Centre; therefore, a transition plan is in place for the next phase of assistance. This includes:

1. Continuation of the online resource on the RDCO website: rdco.com/resiliency
2. Online and in-person support
3. Engagement with local partners and non-profit organizations
4. Guiding residents through the rebuilding process

The Resiliency Centre staff and volunteers appreciate the generosity of organizations that stepped up to bolster the operations of the Resiliency Centre by donating space and office equipment. Staff are also grateful for the many volunteers and nonprofit organizations who have participated to support the recovery efforts along the way.

Recommendation(s):

THAT the Regional Board receives the McDougall Creek Wildfire Resiliency Centre Summary report from the Acting Director of Engineering Services dated November 16, 2023, for information.

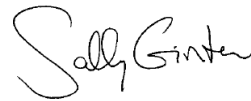
Respectfully submitted by: Kari O'Rourke, Communications Officer

Report Approved by:



Travis Kendel, Acting Director Engineering Services

Approved for Agenda:



Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness | <input type="checkbox"/> Truth and reconciliation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health and wellness | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and climate – Regional priority only |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional transportation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Growth and development – Electoral Area priority only |
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Background:

Recovery Plans are a requirement from the Province of B.C. with the three primary goals: minimize impacts, return to 'normal' quickly and reduce suffering. They also include short-, mid- and long-term objectives to meet these goals. Following the McDougall Creek Wildfire Recovery Plan (2023), the Resiliency Centre has achieved important milestones since opening its doors. Throughout this time, we have reached out to approximately 300 residents impacted where needs assessments and referrals were facilitated and helped wildfire-affected residents navigate the recovery process primarily within the areas of Westbank First Nation, City of West Kelowna and Electoral Area West within the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO).

There are three main accomplishments to highlight throughout the recovery phase.

- **Community Outreach:** Staff conducted extensive outreach to raise awareness about the services offered at the Centre to ensure residents displaced from the McDougall Creek Wildfire had enough information to reestablish themselves. The outreach activities included phone calls, emails, news releases, eNewsletters, and printed materials such as information sheets and business cards. A Returning Home & Experiencing Loss virtual information session on September 12 encouraged residents to access the Recovery Centre as the one point of contact to find resources to support residents in returning home and starting the rebuilding process. For more information, see the McDougall Creek Wildfire Snapshot (Appendix A).
- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** The Debris Management Plan was developed in collaboration with the Resiliency Centre, local government staff and the City of Kelowna. The Plan outlines waste guidelines for fire-damaged materials. Also, together with Westbank First Nation

and the City of West Kelowna, staff at the Resiliency Centre coordinated a holistic approach towards recovery with local agencies and nonprofit organizations. Collaborative efforts enabled us to centralize resources, share expertise, and provide comprehensive support to residents. We successfully received additional aid from the Salvation Army through a \$100,000 donation from the Central Okanagan Foundation, which resulted in funds going directly to our most vulnerable residents.

- **Needs Assessments and Referrals:** Staff completed 84 unmet needs assessments through one-on-one confidential interviews to best inform on recovery gaps and help residents. These included insurance matters, housing needs, general guidance on rebuilding, mental health support services, and resources to help individuals and families cope with the physical and emotional aftermath of wildfires. An Unmet Needs Committee, coordinated by our local Salvation Army led efforts to connect individual resident needs with appropriate local supports. Samaritan's Purse provided an ash-sifting service to impacted properties and helped residents find mementos that were otherwise considered lost or destroyed.

Although the Centre will be closing on November 17, residents undertaking the rebuilding of their homes are encouraged to work closely with their local jurisdiction. Staff recognize the long-term nature of post-disaster recovery doesn't end with the closure of the Resiliency Centre, and updates to the Recovery Plan to incorporate unmet needs have yet to be completed.

A transition plan is in place for the next phase of assistance. This includes:

- **Continuation of the online resource hub:** Staff will bolster the online resources available on [RDCO.com/resiliency](https://rdco.com/resiliency) to house additional information to guide the rebuilding process.
- **Online and In-person supports:** Staff will continue to provide information through the RDCO website, eNewsletters, rebuilding information campaigns, and in-person activities as services are decentralized and returned to local jurisdictions. Frontline staff at each jurisdiction will be equipped with the appropriate information to assist with public inquiries. This approach will enable ongoing guidance to residents until it is no longer required.
- **Engagement with local partners and nonprofits:** Staff will provide "Who to Call" resources for Westbank First Nation, the City of West Kelowna, and RDCO to aid residents who are looking to access support from local agencies, such as the Salvation Army, other aid organizations and mental health services. The ongoing collaboration with our regional partners will enhance the dissemination of information and guide individuals where they need to access assistance outside of rebuilding matters.

Considerations:

Organizational/External:

- Future residents in need of supports previously handled provided through the Resiliency Centre may visit Local Government or Provincial Centres for ongoing support.

- Additional supports to assist with rebuilding efforts in all RDCO, City of West Kelowna, and Westbank First Nation have been requested from the Province (Planners, Inspectors, Administrative assistants)
- Central Okanagan jurisdictions do not typically have staff on hand with the training or experience to support individuals experiencing Trauma or Loss, and referrals to other agencies will be required.

Financial:

- The Resiliency Centre lease, and the nearby temporary ESS location was coordinated and provided to the RDCO through Westbank First Nation at no cost.
- Funding for Resiliency Centre staffing August through to November has been requested and approved by the Province.
- Funding for Community Recovery Managers provided by the Province has been substantially exhausted, and further opportunities for funding are not available.

Legal/Statutory Authority:

- Local Governments, under the Emergency Program Act of BC are required to develop a recovery plan for impacted residents.

Attachment(s): 1. McDougall Creek Wildfire Snapshot
2. PowerPoint Presentation