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Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 2:27 PM

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Subject: Preparing for the 2024 Wildfire Season: A Unified Approach

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Dear Municipal Leaders,

I hope this message finds you well. As we stand on the threshold of Alberta's wildfire season, I wanted to reach out to you directly to discuss our preparedness for the months ahead.

In 2023, our province experienced an unprecedented wildfire season, affecting thousands of our citizens and dozens of communities across Alberta. The impact was profound, and it has driven us to focus intently on enhancing our readiness to safeguard our communities in 2024.

Current conditions signal a pressing concern for us all. Following a winter characterized by dryness and mild temperatures, we are beginning this year with 64 carryover fires, a figure that is tenfold the average. This is especially alarming as we face drought conditions across Alberta. Without significant rainfall in the coming months, the northern half of our province could see a spring fraught with high wildfire danger.

In response to this, the Minister of Forestry and Parks has announced the early start of the wildfire season in Alberta. This proactive measure ensures that permits are required for all burning within the Forest Protection Area, significantly reducing the potential for human-caused wildfires.

To bolster our efforts, the provincial government has taken several key steps, including:

- The addition of more sustained action unit crews and aircraft to our suppression resources.
- Extending operational hours to maximize firefighting efforts during optimal conditions.
- Early mobilization of firefighters and contractors to ensure readiness.
- Increasing the number of Incident Management Teams for strategic management of large-scale wildfires.
- Implementing night vision helicopter operations for enhanced nighttime firefighting capabilities.
- Expanding training opportunities for wildland firefighters and support staff.
- Growing the emergency firefighter program to enable greater community involvement.
- Strengthening communications with local communities and industries.
- Leveraging resource sharing agreements for national collaboration.

Aware of the significant role human activity plays in wildfire ignition, with 61% of last year's wildfires being human-caused, we are prepared to utilize every tool at our disposal to mitigate risks. The fire ban system will be a critical component in our strategy, limiting certain activities when wildfire risks are elevated.

The province remains committed to being flexible and responsive to changing conditions. Our dedicated website, albertafirebans.ca, will provide up-to-date information on fire advisories, restrictions, or bans.

We encourage all Lakeland municipalities and residents, especially those in forested areas, to embrace FireSmart principles and prepare their homes and communities. Furthermore, the province has made grants available through the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) for communities interested in creating fireguards. For more details on the Community Fireguard Program and its benefits, please visit the following links: [Community Fireguard Program Overview](#) and [Program Outline](#).

As we await the release of more details following the 2024 Budget announcement, I encourage you to maintain dialogue with your nearest forest area office and stay engaged with local wildfire prevention initiatives. Our collective priority remains the safety and well-being of Albertans and our communities throughout this wildfire season.

Let us work together with vigilance and preparedness to face the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

Scott Cyr MLA,
Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul