



ALBERTA

FORESTRY AND PARKS

*Office of the Minister*

AR18944

March 26, 2024

Reeve Mr. Barry Kalinski  
P.O. Box 1010  
Bonnyville AB T9N 2J7

Dear Reeve Mr. Barry Kalinski:

I wanted to reach out to you directly at the start of Alberta's wildfire season to share how we are preparing for the months ahead.

In 2023, Alberta experienced a record-breaking wildfire season which affected thousands of people and dozens of communities. I understand the impact last season had on Albertans and we have been focused on preparing to help keep our communities safe in 2024.

Alberta is experiencing drought conditions. The dryness and mild temperatures we saw over the winter mean that we started this year with 64 carryover fires, that's ten times the average number of wildfires already burning. If the province does not see significant rainfall in the next few months, we could be facing another spring of high wildfire danger, particularly in the northern half of the province.

That is one reason why I announced that wildfire season will start early this year in Alberta. This will give us the opportunity to ensure that a permit is required for all burning in the Forest Protection Area, reducing the likelihood of human-caused wildfires.

We will be enhancing our ability to fight wildfires in 2024, as well as using a variety of tools to prevent wildfires from starting.

We are preparing for this season by:

- Adding more sustained action unit crews and aircraft to our suppression resources.
- Extending operational hours to enable firefighters to work during times when fire activity is lower.
- Starting firefighters and contractors earlier in order to be more prepared in case of early wildfire starts.

- Increasing the number of Incident Management Teams which strategically tackle large-scale wildfires.
- Enhancing the use of night vision helicopter operations to enable more nighttime firefighting.
- Developing our ability to deliver wildland firefighter and support staff training to outside agencies.
- Expanding the emergency firefighter program to give more Albertans the opportunity to support wildfire operations near their communities.
- Strengthening our communications with local communities and industry.
- Making use of resource sharing agreements such as those through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre.

The Alberta Government will also be using the tools at our disposal to help reduce the number of human-caused wildfires when the hazard is high. Last year, 61 per cent of wildfires were caused by human activity. The fire ban system restricts some behaviour when there is an elevated risk of wildfires. We will be flexible and responsive to changing conditions, but when needed we will not hesitate to bring in measures in order to prevent any new wildfire starts. For the latest information on any fire advisories, restrictions or bans in place please visit [albertafirebans.ca](http://albertafirebans.ca).

I encourage all municipalities and their residents, especially those living in or near our forested areas, to familiarise themselves with FireSmart principles and prepare their homes, properties and communities to be resilient to wildfire.

We have made grants available to communities interested in creating fireguards through the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta. Any communities at risk of wildfire can contact FRIAA for more information about the Community Fireguard Program.

I am looking forward to releasing more details of how we are working to protect our province from wildfires this season now that the 2024 Budget is announced. In the meantime, please continue this conversation with your nearest forest area office, stay in touch with local wildfire prevention initiatives, and remember that our number one priority remains keeping Albertans and our communities safe this wildfire season.

Sincerely,



Honourable Todd Loewen  
Minister  
Forestry and Parks