



Community Infrastructure - Housing, Education and Health Fact Sheet

October 2009

The Oil Sands Developers Group works with communities and planners in the Wood Buffalo Region to better understand and address infrastructure concerns and to improve the quality of life for present and future residents. Industry has long fostered the development of the region by contributing directly to the building of housing, bridges, roads, recreational amenities, health care facilities and much more. Land purchases, royalties and taxes paid to governments by industry also contribute to infrastructure development.

Housing

Fact: Housing prices in Fort McMurray are higher than most communities in Canada – but like many communities across Canada, costs are moderating in the face of the current economic challenges.

- In 2008, the average rental price of a two-bedroom apartment was just over \$2,300 per month, and the average cost of a single-family home was more than \$682,000.
- In comparison, the average rental price of a two-bedroom apartment in Calgary was \$1,148, and a typical single-family home cost an average of \$405,000.
- The cost of a room for rent in Fort McMurray can range between \$400 and \$1,500 per month, and the cost of a hotel or motel for one person can range from \$109 to \$500 per night.

Fact: Many employers offer assistance to employees to address housing challenges, including:

- Salary components such as cost of living allowances;
- Flying employees to and from their homes in other regions; and
- Temporary accommodations for workers in camp/lodge facilities.

Fact: Fort McMurray and the Wood Buffalo region continue to grow.

- Fort McMurray has experienced a 9 per cent compounding annual growth rate over the last seven years – urban planners generally consider a rate of 3 per cent to be “explosive.”
- With the deferral of oil sands projects, the permanent population is currently forecasted by OSDG to increase by about 2 per cent annually over the next three years, representing a growth of approximately 10,000 people over this time period.

Fact: The mobile workforce also influences the housing market.

- There are between 8,000 and 27,000 people employed as mobile workers at any given time, with this number heavily influenced by the level of ongoing construction activity.
- Three quarters of mobile workers stay in camps or lodges; others stay in rented dwellings, hotels, motels or campsites in the region influencing cost and availability of housing.

Fact: New housing is expected.

- Two new communities are planned to house about 40,000 people in thousands of new homes on 1,600 hectares (4,000 acres) of land. The communities are to include new schools, health clinics, recreational facilities, parks and other community services.
- The Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation, the region’s affordable housing authority, expects to bring about 370 units to the market by 2010 to assist lower income residents.

Education

Fact: About 10,000 primary and secondary school students in Fort McMurray attend city schools, and many will soon be learning in new and upgraded school facilities.

- The Fort McMurray Public School District employs about 260 teachers and 300 support staff with a student enrolment of about 4,800. It oversees 12 schools.

- In 2009, the public school district will begin building École McTavish, a junior and senior high school which will accommodate 1,100 students and will feature 800 instructional spaces. It is scheduled to open in 2011.
- The Fort McMurray Catholic School District operates nine schools that accommodate just over 4,300 students. It employs 240 full-time teachers and 175 support staff.
- Construction of a new separate junior and senior high school will begin in 2009.
- Both school districts offer specialized programs including French Immersion programming, Aboriginal programming and special needs programming as well as fine arts and athletic opportunities.

Fact: Post-secondary educational opportunities continue to expand with programs tailored to meet the specific needs of the students and the local economy.

- Keyano College consists of four campuses and four learning centres, and its 2008/09 enrolment of full-time students was about 1,500. Its total enrolment exceeds 3,000.
- The college offers high school to university transfer and degree programs, trades, arts and heavy industrial training.
- The college is now fundraising to build a \$130-million Oil Sands Trades & Technology Centre which, when completed, is expected to bring enrolment up to about 2,000 full-time students.
- The \$36-million Syncrude Sport & Wellness Centre is a 13,000-square-metre (140,000-square-foot) facility located at Keyano College.

Health

Fact: Oil sands companies support the health and wellness of employees by sharing responsibility in providing some of these services.

- Health centres located at member company work sites offer emergency and diagnostic services and employ doctors, nurses and other health care professionals to serve the needs of employees and lessen the burden on the local hospital.
- Some companies have signed mutual aid agreements to complement and enhance existing emergency services.

Fact: The local health region, government and industry are all investing in health care to provide new services and accommodate a growing population.

- Oil sands companies have invested millions in their own health care facilities and health care professionals, as well as in community health services and equipment.
- Several community health and wellness centres are in the works and each centre would serve about 20,000 people in a different area of the Community of Fort McMurray.
- The region's emergency department treated more than 75,000 people last year, and a \$1.7-million expansion is underway to increase its capacity.
- A \$6.5-million project to improve ambulatory care will wrap up in 2009.
- About \$600,000 is being invested in the hospital's intensive care unit.
- The hospital's paediatric unit has been renovated and upgraded to offer more rooms, new beds, new equipment and a new nursing station.
- About \$1.1 million was invested locally in health infrastructure maintenance in 2008.
- A new helipad will be built by the health region in 2009.
- Construction will begin on a \$35-million, 48-bed continuing care facility in 2009. The centre will be designed to double its capacity in the future.

Sources for all data available upon request