

Fire, Tragedy, and Hope

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Fort McMurray, once a vibrant and bustling city, took quite a hit from the drop in oil prices, but more than 80,000 people still lived and worked there until last week. In a matter of a few days, Fort McMurray became a vacant, burned-out shell.

If you had to leave your house knowing that it, and everything in it would burn, what would you take? Tragedies like this should make us stop and think about the things that matter most, human lives most of all!

Is there something that we can each do to help?

Even in the face of this tragedy, we should be thankful and hopeful that it was not worse. Buildings and houses can be re-built. This fire could have caused major loss of life, but as I write, no lives have been lost directly in the flames.

Tragically, several lives were lost in accidents as people fled the fires along crowded roads. These stories are hard to hear: someone, who escaped the blaze and seemed to be safe, killed by an error. We should pray especially for comfort in these times of greatest loss.

Other stories that have emerged from the disaster zone have been more hopeful; several mothers gave birth to healthy newborns, and with this news, hope and joy are restored. People are what make communities, first and foremost, and a large majority of Fort McMurray residents will hopefully be able to return and rebuild — with the help of many other Canadians.

Alberta faces a staggering financial loss of up to \$9 billion. Some of you may have already donated time or money to help the residents. Albertans will rally around the re-building of Fort McMurray, and hopefully the rest of Canada rallies around Alberta in this time of need.

Tragedy can make us stronger and more caring if we recognize the tragedy and open our hearts. The fires of Northern Alberta and BC are obvious, the pictures and videos shock and scare us, but we must remember that not all tragedies are as obvious. Losses of homes are terrible, but loss of life is an even greater tragedy.

May the compassion that fills our hearts for the people of Fort McMurray also extend to the communities of Cross Lake and Attawapiskat as they too declared states of emergency this year — not because of houses burning, but because of lives lost to suicide—a tragic testimony to the hopelessness that some members of Canadian First Nations feel. May Canadians’ hearts also break for the smallest of lives, those still in the womb, and recognize that their loss through abortion is also a tragedy, albeit nearly invisible.

CHP expresses its sympathies to those who have lost homes, and many other treasured possessions, but especially to those who have lost loved ones in accidents relating to the fires.

We also express appreciation to the firefighters, doctors and medical staff, military personnel, police officers, and volunteers who are helping on the front lines. Please pray for their safety and well-being.

During such tragic times many will face periods of hopelessness; we recognize the toll such events can take and encourage those most affected to persevere to brighter days. Each and every human life has value and destiny and we want protection for all. Many lives need to be rebuilt in this country, many need hope in hard times, and affirming the value of each life will give greater hope to all in this time of tragedy.

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