

March 15, 2014

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Attention: The Honourable Kenneth Hughes, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Government of Alberta
307, 10800 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister,

I am extremely concerned for the future of my town, and I believe that a program administered under your leadership is putting the future at risk. I am asking you to reconsider your most recent position on the Disaster Recovery Program, as your position is, likely inadvertently, not aiding in recovery for High River residents.

Setting targets for completion on the Disaster Recovery Program has not produced the result that residents of High River need. Targets have placed pressure on the staff members who are working on the many Disaster Recovery Program files. The pressure has produced the unintended result of prematurely closing those files.

As an example, a friend of mine and High River resident has been working very hard and collegially with the Disaster Recovery Program to recover his basement. He received a letter from the program on September 23, 2013 indicating that he would be covered by the program. He had completed all the necessary flood-mitigative steps and paperwork by November 23, 2013, and was given the assurance that he had done exactly what he needed to be covered by the program. On March 11, 2014, he received a phone call indicating that he would not be covered after all, with no explanation. This leaves him paying for the work to his basement himself, and effectively ruining him financially to the point where he will now have to move from not just High River, but Alberta entirely.

When he pressed the various people he had worked with on his file for details, he was informed that as he was an early filer, and the Disaster Recovery Program had been changed or restructured since he filed, he was placed under "special review", even after he had completed the paperwork as was expected of him. As a result of being shifted to "special review", the promise of coverage from the program was effectively clawed back.

The only logical reason for this is that pressure has been placed on staff members, or LandLink, has cause them to prematurely close files leaving residents in a lurch. Further, having LandLink continue to work with the files they've already had access to will compound the issue.

This has a much more significant impact than a single individual, for if this excess pressure is indeed the case, many other flood victims will be affected in a similar fashion. Even before finding out he was denied, my friend has also gone through significant physical and mental strain that has now been compounded by the denial. I also know that this is a purveying issue in High River; both physical and mental health. Any other flood victims affected by premature closing of Disaster Recovery Program files will force them to move.

If people don't get their Disaster Recovery Program funding, they can't rebuild their basements, homes and businesses. If people can't rebuild their basements, homes and businesses, they can't move back. Therefore, they won't shop in High River. They won't open up shop in High River. They won't work in High River. They won't break bread with each other in High River. They won't play in High River. They certainly will have no vested interest in protecting it and rebuilding it for the future.

Having been involved in the volunteer Business Renewal Advisory Committee in High River, I already know how tenuous the situation in High River is for homeowners and businesses. I am extremely concerned that these sudden denials of Disaster Recovery Program claims will be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back, and High River will not be able to survive it.

I am asking that you completely shift your position on the completion of the Disaster Recovery Program. Not renewing a contract with LandLink is a good decision, but letting them keep the files they've already got is not going to solve the issue of their involvement, nor do they have a vested interest in successful completion of those files. The current position is forcing active files to be rammed through, and if necessary cancelled, with little to no consideration for the people and communities they directly affect.

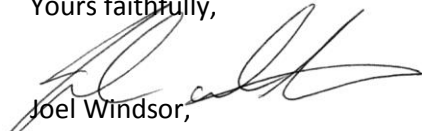
I am asking that you commit to fully fund every Disaster Recovery Program claim as property owners have been promised. I am asking you to completely remove LandLink from the process with no exceptions. I am asking your office take over any remaining outstanding files where no statement of coverage has been offered to the property owner. I am also asking you to add the consideration of these two questions in the completion of those outstanding files;

- Is this going to get people home sooner? And
- Is this going to help High River rebuild?

Lastly, I'm asking that you resist every urge to shift a deadline or target date again. Flood victims need something stable to work with, and the regular shifting of deadlines and target dates leaves them with complete instability.

Please send me a letter or email to discuss how you will be responding to my requests. Thank you for your hard work in correcting the issues with the Disaster Recovery Program. I know it has not been an easy portfolio to take over, and appreciate the nights of sleep you must lose over it. I'm hoping my requests here guide you to a more fruitful solution to the issues.

Yours faithfully,



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High River Resident

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CC: The Honourable Alison Redford, Premier of Alberta

The Honourable Rick Fraser, Associate Minister of Recovery and Reconstruction for High River

Ms. Danielle Smith, MLA for Highwood and Leader of the Her Majesty's Official Opposition