

MEDIA RELEASE
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Resilience Begins Before the Disaster

CALGARY - Alberta has seen two of the worst natural disasters in the province's history within the last few years. The Southern Alberta flood of 2013 and the fires that raged across Fort McMurray earlier this year both caused tremendous trauma to those affected and billions of dollars in damage.

To share lessons learned from these events and respond, experts from private industry, academia, the non-profit sector and the government addressed disaster resilience at the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region's Annual Summit, taking place July 18-20 at the Hyatt Regency.

The need for more resilient infrastructure in the face of climate change and frequent natural disasters was addressed Tuesday during a keynote speech by Aris Papadopoulos, founder and chair of the Resilience Action Fund and author of "Resilience, The Ultimate Sustainability."

Papadopoulos said weak building codes are costing society dearly when buildings fail in the face of disaster. Developed societies are not exempt: Papadopoulos said the United States is the world leader in lost value from residential buildings due to disasters. He said society needs to raise the bar for resiliency in building codes instead of relying on "escape" building codes designed to provide enough time for people to exit a building.

"We are saving lives but losing livelihoods when buildings and homes are destroyed by disasters. Stronger building codes are needed and they are cost effective!" Papadopoulos said.

Resilience in the built environment was also a key feature of the Energy and Environment Session, which took place Monday morning.

Michael McSweeney, president and CEO of the Cement Association of Canada, addressed trends in climate policy and carbon pricing and the importance of infrastructure in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"We believe collaborative leadership is essential to overcoming systemic challenges like climate change. Through well designed policy-based solutions and continued product innovations, our industry will continue to be a proactive partner in helping our communities transition to a low carbon, climate resilient future," McSweeney said.

The session also addressed how to respond to disasters and prevent future damage with resilient designs. Kevin Davis, Director of Sales of Quad-Lock Building Systems, brought up a need for disaster-resilient homes as a key feature of the rebuilding effort of Fort McMurray. Approximately 2,000 homes will need to be rebuilt in Fort McMurray, Davis said. Challenges for the rebuilding effort will include the current capacity to rebuild in terms of contractors and materials, meeting building codes and standards, worker training, costs of materials and freight, and insurance coverage, Davis said.

On Tuesday afternoon, 25 PNWER delegates toured the Enmax District Energy Centre and the Calgary Emergency Operations Centre. During the June 2013 flood, the District Energy Centre remained fully operational. Due to the elevated main boiler room floor, which contains the boilers, backup generation, and electrical switch gear, the District Energy Centre operation was virtually unaffected by flood waters. However, approximately 5000 square feet of space below grade was flooded, resulting in over \$1M in damage. During remediation, two-inch thick glass and steel-reinforced mullions were installed on all low-level glass post-flood to prevent the force of any future flood water from breaching the building exterior.

The Calgary Emergency Operations Centre features a backup 9-1-1 call centre, data centre, media workspace and amphitheatre, generators, office space, kitchen and gym. Keeping these functions in one place raises the city's ability to coordinate resources and information to support disaster response as well as short- and long-term recovery efforts.

"Disaster response is what draws all the attention when disasters strike," said Eric Holdeman, Director of PNWER's Center for Regional Disaster Resilience. "In the end, the resilient community is one that has prepared before hand, by investing in disaster resilience that looks long-term and not just what is the cheapest and fastest way to build or rebuild a community."

ABOUT THE PNWER SUMMIT

Held in alternating member jurisdictions each year, the annual PNWER summit draws hundreds of key business leaders, legislators and community leaders from PNWER's 10 states, provinces and territories. Summit participants meet to develop action items on policy issues in working groups focused on: agriculture, the Arctic, border issues, cross-border livestock health, disaster resilience, energy, environment, forestry, invasive species, infrastructure, mining, natural gas, municipal and economic development, transportation, trade and regulatory cooperation, tourism, workforce development and water policy.

More information about the PNWER Summit is available at www.pnwer.org/2016-summit

ABOUT PNWER

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a statutory non-profit public/private partnership chartered by the states and provinces in 1991. Member jurisdictions include Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Washington, and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Yukon and Northwest Territories. PNWER's mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region while maintaining and enhancing our natural environment; identify and promote "models of success" and serve as a conduit to exchange information.