



WHEELS - 2017 KIA SPORTAGE - PAGE B6

## WAGON



# No end in sight



The Canadian Press  
Fire rescue crews unload in preparation to battle a wildfire in Fort McMurray, Alta., on Thursday. An ever-changing, volatile situation is fraying the nerves of residents and officials alike as the massive wildfire continues to bear down on the Fort McMurray area of northern Alberta.

## Fire threatening Fort McMurray explodes in size; premier won't say when it may be safe to return

By The Canadian Press

FORT MCMURRAY, Alta. — Crews fighting to save Fort McMurray from rampaging flames water-bombed the city Thursday to try to keep away a wildfire so intense it has spawned its own weather.

"It was creating its own high winds yesterday, and even lightning was coming from the smoke clouds it created," Chad Morrison of Alberta Forestry told a briefing in Edmonton on Thursday.

He said the fire continued to grow Thursday, but at a slower rate than before, and the spread was happening in forested areas away from the community.

Officials could not update the number of structures that have burned — already at 1,600 — saying crews had not had the time.

Morrison said there were 22 water bombers at work and more were coming in, including four from Quebec.

"But let me be clear: air tankers are not going to stop this fire," he said. "It is going to continue to



The Canadian Press  
Evacuees from the Fort McMurray wildfire arrive at the evacuation centre in Lac La Biche, Alta., Thursday.

push through these dry conditions until we actually get some significant rain."

Crews received a small break Thursday with temperatures forecast to fall to 16 C from the low 30s. But low humidity and high winds were expected to keep the situation

fluid and dangerous.

They continued to fight the blaze near the evacuated community of Anzac, where the flames were getting closer to buildings.

The risk in the rest of the province also remained high, and a provincewide fire ban was issued

Thursday afternoon.

Premier Rachel Notley told a news conference that officials cannot speculate on when it might be safe for residents to return to the city except that "it will not be a matter of days."

She said even when the fire situation is brought under control, officials will need time to assess buildings and infrastructure so that people can be brought back safely.

"I know this experience is heart-breaking . . . and a devastating experience for individuals and for the families that are affected," she said. "I understand the Albertans that are affected by this tragedy are scared, and very tired, and very worried about their homes and what the future holds for themselves and their families."

"Trust us that we have your backs." Notley also said in coming days there will be more information about aid for evacuees, including government-issued cash cards and temporary housing options.

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### CIVIC FACILITIES

## Dissent stalls plan for new city hall

Opponents ensure West Kelowna project won't proceed without a referendum

By Daily Courier Staff

West Kelowna's plan to build a new city hall will have to go through a referendum after almost 15 per cent of the electorate signed petitions opposing the plan.

A total of 3,871 valid elector response forms were submitted in opposition to the City of West Kelowna borrowing up to \$10.5 million to build a new city hall, exceeding the 2,603 forms required to halt the process.

"Council has certainly heard that there is opposition to the alternative approval process, and some questions still outstanding about the project itself," said Mayor Doug Findlater after the petitions were counted. "Council will regroup on Tuesday and discuss next steps, but after seeing almost 15 per cent of voters engaged with this process, there is no doubt that there is significant interest in the community about this project."



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### WISE WORDS

A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.

— Walter Winchell

### WISE COUNSEL

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### GAS WATCH

Lowest price in the Kelowna area as of 5 p.m. yesterday, via gasbuddy.com.  
106.9 at several stations

# Apart from family as hometown burns

## Former Fort Mac resident barely has time to settle in Kelowna before wildfire breaks out, threatening family

By ANDREA PEACOCK  
The Daily Courier

When Taylor Hammond moved to Kelowna from Fort McMurray, Alta., three weeks ago, she never imagined a raging fire would soon

make her hometown almost unrecognizable.

Hammond, 22, was born and raised in Fort McMurray, where the majority of her family and friends still live.

"I wanted to start a new chapter in my life, so I came here and got a job," she said. "My parents have a home in Kelowna, and my brother has lived here since August."

When the fire broke out around Fort McMurray this week, forcing the evacuation of the entire city of 80,000 people, Hammond was terrified for the safety of her family.

Both her parents work at

Syncrude, a crude oil producer, 40 kilometres north of Fort McMurray.

Her dad works as a firefighter and emergency co-ordinator, and her mom is a nurse.

"They went to work in the morning and they weren't able to go home," said Hammond.

"My sister was at home with my grandma at the time, and my dad called my sister and told them to evacuate."

Hammond's 20-year-old sister and her grandma packed a couple of duffel bags and tried to drive south out of Fort McMurray but were turned back as the flames

crossed the highway.

Instead, they drove to be with Hammond's parents at Syncrude, which has opened its doors to evacuees.

"They stayed with them until 10:30 at night, then they finally got the go-ahead to drive south," said Hammond. "They were only letting people go who had a full tank of gas."

Her grandmother and younger sister drove 400 kilometres south of Fort McMurray to Legal, Alta., to stay with relatives and will soon make their way to Kelowna.

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Model not exactly as shown