

## 211 Springs Into Action for Fort McMurray Evacuees

The Fort McMurray wildfire began on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, and two days later it swept through the town, forcing Alberta's largest wildfire evacuation. 88,000 residents were safely evacuated.

Many of the evacuees headed for the safety of Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary, and their neighbours welcomed them with offers of accommodation, food, and other donations.

The 211 database and call centres were ready to handle an influx of calls from evacuees and the public. From May 12 to May 18, almost 400 wildfire related calls came into the crisis centre from across the region, many from evacuees, others from people wanting to donate time, space, or money.

The majority of calls came from evacuees, who were inquiring about housing, evacuee reception and registration, emergency funds, and supplies. Information and referral specialists also assisted with calls regarding crisis support, volunteering, general information, donations, and veterinary care.

Although the wildfire continues to burn, some residents will be allowed back to what is left of their homes over the next few weeks. During that time, 211 will be on hand to answer questions about on-going needs and support. Fort McMurray residents will continue to need many types of assistance ranging from every day issues like replacement of household items to counselling. And, 211 will be there for the long haul, as it was for the residents affected by the High River and Calgary flooding of 2013.