



## News Release

October 5, 2017

for immediate release

### ***Industry and municipal partnership means 24/7 helicopter medevac services in the region will continue***

**Fort McMurray, Alberta** – Local oil sands companies and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) are collaborating to ensure the Local Helicopter Emergency Response Organization (H.E.R.O.) Foundation will continue providing 24/7 medevac services for residents in northeastern Alberta.

Phoenix Heli-Flight established the Local H.E.R.O. Foundation in 2013 with the goal of enhancing regional medevac helicopter coverage. Phoenix Heli-Flight, who had been responsible for ad-hoc medevac services in the region for more than two decades, recognized the need for a higher level of service and new resources to adequately support evolving local needs.

“With incidents on isolated stretches of Highways 63 and 881 as well as remote locations and industrial worksites, a medevac service was necessary to reduce the time required to transport patients to a primary care facility,” said Local H.E.R.O. spokesperson Andrea Montgomery Spring, Director of Stakeholder and Community Relations

Before 2013, medevac operations had been limited to daylight hours and a minimum level of weather conditions. Night Vision Goggle operations and the delivery of a new EC135 T2+ helicopter meant the Local H.E.R.O. Foundation has been able to provide a 24/7 emergency response.

“Everyone understands the importance of medevac services in our region,” explains Jody Butz, Regional Fire Chief and Director of Emergency Management with the RMWB. “As a community we have come together to ensure that these essential services continue to be available when they are needed most. I’d like to thank all of our partners and our Council for showing the leadership to support this integral and lifesaving service.”

“This past spring, Oil Sands Community Alliance (OSCA) members contributed a total of \$1M to the H.E.R.O. Foundation to provide enhanced medevac service,” says OSCA Executive Director, Karim Zariffa. “Our industry is pleased to support a new approach to medevac services which benefits both residents and workers in the region.”

While the benefits of enhanced medevac service delivery are clear, the significant costs associated with 24/7 dedicated emergency helicopter coverage have proved challenging. In 2015, OSCA and other local partners began investigating a more sustainable funding model that would ensure service continuity. These discussions have secured commitment from each



signatory to support the service until March 2019. The collaborative funding agreement makes up two thirds of H.E.R.O.'s \$3M fixed costs. The remaining funds will be contributed by Alberta Health Services. Additional operational costs will be covered by the Foundation's fundraising efforts.

For media inquiries, please contact:

RMWB: E: <a href="mailto:media@rmwb.ca">media@rmwb.ca</a>  <a href="http://www.rmwb.ca">www.rmwb.ca</a>	OSCA: E: <a href="mailto:info@oscaalberta.ca">info@oscaalberta.ca</a>  <a href="http://www.oscaalberta.ca">www.oscaalberta.ca</a>
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