

# CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*Fire Chiefs on the Hill, December 2025*



**Thank you for meeting with the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs! Your office is an important part of the Fire Service in Canada.**

We have prepared this leave behind to help you and staff follow up and remember our meeting together. Here's the agenda:

1. Who are we?
2. What's needed?
3. How can you help?
4. Participants

**Better together**  
 CAFC's National Advisory Council brings together all provincial and territorial fire chief associations as well as all national affiliate organizations. CAFC's members are individual fire chiefs and company officers.

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## 1. Who are we?

Founded in 1909, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) is an independent, non-profit organization representing approximately 3,200 fire departments across Canada. CAFC's Mission is to advance safe, effective, and sustainable fire and emergency services across Canada. CAFC's Vision is to see Canada's fire and emergency management leaders united in service of public health and safety.



**About Fire Departments**  
 Fire suppression is only 10% of fire department's 10-16 all-hazard service response. Fire departments are often the authorities having jurisdiction in an emergency.



## 2. What's Needed? Government of Canada Must Improve in Fire, Emergency and Life Safety

### A. Why must the Government of Canada improve in fire, emergency, and life safety?

Canada has been making well-intentioned policy decisions that have fire and life safety implications in a blind spot. Unrecognized fire and life safety issues compound risk and can result in catastrophic losses, compromising nation-building, housing, the economy, and posing risks for public and firefighter safety. It also creates "mis" investments of good political will and taxpayer dollars.

(WELL-INTENTIONED) POLICY – (FIRE + EMERGENCY + LIFE SAFETY EXPERTISE)  
= (MIS)INVESTMENT + COMPOUNDING CATASTROPHIC RISKS

### B. What are areas of critical concern in fire, emergency and life safety?



**Explosives Branch of Natural Resources Canada:** 98% of big cities and 70% of smaller and medium sized cities, have had to put bylaws in place because federal legislation permits the sale of fireworks to consumers. NRCAN is considering removing fire safety plan reporting.



**Wildfire Branch National Resources Canada:** By May 2025, only 12% of fire departments were aware of federal wildfire training, only 20% received any federal funding for equipment, and only 20% had trained trainers for FireSmart. Federal investments are not translating locally.



**Housing and Infrastructure Canada:** About 25% of fire departments that observed an increase in caseload due to increased housing received additional resources for fire and life safety.



**Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation:** Awarded an innovation prize for proposed removal of an emergency exit while 91% of Canada's largest cities consider it a safety risk. Its 10 best practices for the Housing Accelerator Fund include removing zoning restrictions and increase building heights and density but are silent on fire and life safety risks.



**Health Canada:** While the formation of the national firefighter's cancer framework and registry are commendable, 25% of the country's fire departments are using gear older than the industry standard about 20% have nowhere to wash their gear at the station.



**Public Safety Canada:** Over the past 5 years, the federal government has invested in firefighter mental health through research and self-directed online therapy. Only 13% of fire departments believe these investments have helped the front line, 45% felt that 1:1 therapy would have been a better investment.



**Transport Canada:** Only 20% of fire departments feel confident in their response to the transportation of dangerous goods by air or water, 25% by rail, and 55% by road. Only 30% are aware of the federally funded training for HAZMAT.



**Codes Commission:** The codes commission has introduced hundreds of changes to the building codes over the past code cycle. Only 30% of fire departments feel they have the training, equipment and ability to respond to new building modalities. Close to 40 task groups need fire operations expertise.

### C. What are some areas where federal policy and funding have been effective?

- ✓ **Remission from surcharges on emergency equipment and vehicles:** rapid action to ensure fire department and other health and public safety equipment needs were exempt from surtaxes and tariffs.
- ✓ **Doubling of the Volunteer Firefighter Tax Credit:** Doubling the Firefighter tax credit in wildfire season 2024 sent a clear message to volunteer firefighters that their efforts were needed and appreciated.
- ✓ **Canada Community Building Fund:** Formerly the Gas Tax Fund, the federal government with the provinces and territories now allows fire department applications to be eligible for consideration.
- ✓ **Harmonization of Codes and new Codes Process:** Revising governance to place P/Ts as responsible to residents for integration of science, safety, economy, and environment rather than special interests
- ✓ **Search and Rescue New Initiatives Fund:** Providing funding which has facilitated improving interoperability between search and rescue organizations and fire departments nationally.
- ✓ **Women and Gender Equality Grants (WAGE):** WAGE grants have facilitated projects intended to improve psychological safety and encourage participation of women and girls in fire departments.
- ✓ **WildfireSat Program Management:** actively considering local fire departments as part of the planning and development of WildfireSat increasing relevance and opportunity.



### 3. How can the Federal Government improve in Fire, Emergency, and Life Safety for Canadians?

#### Step 1: Take responsibility for Fire, Emergency, and Life safety implications of Federal Budget Measures

Federal Budget Measures	From a Fire, Emergency and Life Safety Perspective...
<b>P. 183</b> "Emergency Preparedness Systems: 1.5 % GDP... defense and security-related...all levels of Canadian government, such as...emergency preparedness systems"	<b>GOOD:</b> 60% of fire departments deferred purchase of emergency equipment due to budget pressures. Canada is safer when communities can respond to emergency.
<b>P. 167</b> "...Youth Climate Corps: \$40M ... trained to quickly respond to climate emergencies, support recovery, and strengthen resilience in communities..."	<b>CAUTION:</b> 70% of volunteer firefighters are between the age of 18 and 50; fire departments in Canada are all hazard, 66% of fire departments are trying to recruit firefighters, 50% of fire departments are AHJs who are responsible for safety in emergencies.
<b>P. 151- 158</b> "Supercharging Affordability: \$13B ... 4,000 factory-built homes...45,000 units...\$1B transitional and supportive housing....290,000 units annually... \$60 to \$80B...multi-unit housing"	<b>CAUTION:</b> 77% of fire departments are saying that they will need to change training, equipment practices, considering new construction codes. Increasing density, building height, and combustibility, particularly for multi-unit housing has significant risks.
<b>P. 209</b> "Streamlining Infrastructure Programs: 51B for infrastructure funding to provinces, territories and municipalities, while relying on their expertise to determine how funding can best be allocated."	<b>CAUTION:</b> 50% of fire departments are identifying imminent infrastructure risks that could result in a local emergency. Need to ensure that these are transparently addressed in FPT conversations.
<b>P. 57</b> "Major Projects Office (MPO)...single point of contact to get nation-building projects built faster... whether a project will strengthen Canada's autonomy, resilience, and security."	<b>GOOD:</b> assessing resilience should also be done from a fire, emergency and life safety perspective, both in the construction and operations phase and in relation to the local communities in the surroundings.
<b>P. 101.</b> "Airports Capital Assistance Program: \$55.2 M... support safety related infrastructure ... support dual-use priorities, at local, regional airports."	<b>CAUTION:</b> this program has favored high passenger volume airports, leaving communities with less resources to use local fire department resources.
<b>P. 108.</b> "Electric Vehicles...launching a 60-day review of the overall regulation...followed by plan"	<b>CAUTION:</b> 80% of cities responding to major incidents involving Lion (in EVs). Sixty days won't yield a good plan.
<b>P. 194</b> "Renewing Canada's National Public Alerting System: \$55.4 in 26-27, \$13M ongoing...."	<b>CLARIFY:</b> At first blush this appears like a measure duplicative of regional and provincial efforts. We are told that we may have misunderstood this. Welcome clarity.
<b>P. 195</b> "Strengthening Canada's Emergency Management: \$257.6M...lease four aircraft to bolster P/T aerial firefighting capacity"	<b>CLARIFY:</b> Last year, some planes were grounded due to lack of personnel. Planes do not stop fire, they slow fire.

#### Step 2: Determine and act on a preferred model for a whole of Federal Government approach to step 1

Fire chiefs have asked the Federal Government for a **National Fire Administration (NFA)**. An NFA engages with the country's fire departments to provide all federal departments with advice on fire, emergency, and life safety issues and helps to prepare the sector, mostly volunteer, for the implications of federal policy.

#### Here's what we heard:

"Doable... don't have to lobby... it's in government machinery"	"It will be a level of bureaucracy, costly, an administration, a building with sign"	"These are local issues" or "these are P/T jurisdiction issues"
"Don't understand what would be different"	"You're already doing a good job feeding into consultations"	"We like the system we have...have a wildfire agency...need broader agency"

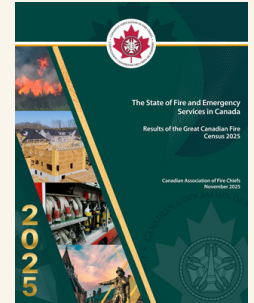
**Fire Chiefs' Recommendation:** Canada must do better in fire, emergency, and life safety to avoid compounding catastrophic risks stemming from federal policy decisions. Choose a model to facilitate the insight needed, even if only as a pilot, before the next large-scale disaster or emergency in 2026 and to guide Federal Budget measures from a fire, emergency, and life safety perspective.



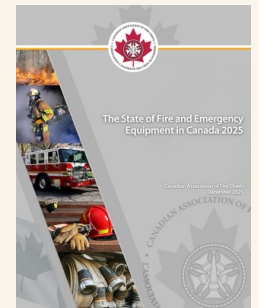
## 4. Fire Chiefs on the Hill Participants

Ken McMullen, President, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, Fire Chief, Red Deer Emergency Services, Red Deer, AB  
Alicia Krawchuk, Regional Chief of Emergency Services, Bonnyville Regional Fire Authority, Bonnyville, AB  
Andrew Mitton, Captain, New Minas Fire Department, New Minas, NS  
Andrew Zvanitajs, Fire Chief, Vaughan Fire & Rescue Services, Vaughan, ON  
Blaine Wiggins, Chief Operations Officer, Indigenous Fire Marshal Service, Tynedinaga Mohawk Territory, ON  
Brad Lamport, Deputy Fire Chief, Clarington, Clarington, ON  
Brian Hunter, Fire Chief, Simonds Fire Rescue, Fundy-St. Martins, NB  
Brian Starkell, Past President, , Nipawin, SK  
Brian Wilson, Fire Chief, Hawkesbury Fire Department, Hawkesbury, ON  
Bryce Luker, Fire Chief / CEMC, Township of East Hawkesbury, East Hawkesbury, ON  
Cameron Abrey, Fire Chief, Dauphin Fire Department, Dauphin, MB  
Charles Kavanaugh, Past President NBAFC, Grand Falls Fire Department, Grand Falls Regional Municipality, NB  
Chantal Bibeau, Deputy Chief, Montréal Fire Department, Laval, QC  
Chris Case, Fire Chief, Chatham-Kent Fire & Rescue, Chatham, ON  
Dan Derby, President, Fire Chiefs Association of BC, Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue, Trail, BC  
Daniel Isabelle, Fire Chief, Centre Mékinac Fire Department, St-Tite, QC  
Darren Sandbeck, Chief Administrative Officer, Bonnyville Regional Fire Authority, Bonnyville, AB  
Dave Robertson, Fire Chief, South Glengarry Fire Services, Lancaster, ON  
David Mohl, Fire Chief, Hanna Fire Department, Hanna, AB  
Evan Cox, President, Clarenville Fire Department, Clarenville, NL  
Fred Poirier, Fire Chief, Ottawa International Airport Fire Service, Ottawa, ON  
Gerard McMahon, District Deputy Chief/President PEI Firefighters Association, Charlottetown Fire Department, Charlottetown, PEI  
Greg Jones, Fire Chief, Amherst Fire Department, Amherst, NS  
Jean-Luc Hudon, Division Chief Prevention, Vice-President Prevention AGSICQ, G.E.A.N.T Intermunicipal Agency, Normandin, QC  
Jeff Jackson, 1st Lieutenant & Training Officer, Trinity South Central Fire Department, Cavendish & Whiteway, NL  
Joey McElroy, Deputy Chief, Carman Dufferin Fire Department, Carman, MB  
Ken Uzeloc, Fire Chief, Kamloops Fire Rescue, Kamloops, BC  
Keri Martens, Fire Chief, Banff Fire Department, Banff, AB  
Kevin Theriault, Fire Chief, Saint Andrews Fire Department, Saint Andrews, NB  
Kelvin Toews, Fire Chief, Steinbach Fire Department, Steinbach, MB  
Mark Bettens, Fire Chief, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, CBRM, NS  
Mark Pound, Secretary, Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association, Kentville, NS  
Mathieu Grenier, Directeur, Service incendie Warwick, Warwick, QC  
Michael Lockett, President, Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association, Lawrencetown, NS  
Nathan Adams, Deputy Fire Chief, Ottawa Fire Services, Ottawa, ON  
Nicholas Power, Fire Chief, St. Bernard, St. Bernard, NS  
Nina McCarthy, Deputy Chief, Fredericton Fire Department, Fredericton, NB  
Normand Beauchamp, Fire Chief, Kapuskasing Fire Department, Kapuskasing, ON  
Paul Maynard, Deputy Chief/Director, Hantsport/CVFSA, Hantsport, NS  
Phil Lemire, Executive Officer, Fire Chiefs Association of BC, White Rock, BC  
Randy Schroeder, Fire Chief, Lac Ste. Anne County Fire Service - Town of Mayerthorpe, Lac Ste. Anne County, AB  
Rob Evans, Fire Chief, Redwood Meadows Emergency Services, Redwood Meadows, AB  
Rod Nielsen, Fire Chief, Brookfield Fire & Emergency Services, Brookfield, NS  
Roger Pitre, Fire Chief, Rogersville, Rogersville, NB  
Scott Morris, Deputy Chief, Thompson Fire and Emergency Services, Thompson, MB  
Scott Poupart, President, Bathurst Fire Service, Bathurst, NB  
Shayne LaMontagne, CVFSA, Regina Beach, SK  
Susan Jones, Executive Director, Fire Service Women Ontario, Kanata, ON  
Terry Parlow, Chief of Emergency Services, Brandon Fire and Emergency Services, Brandon, MB  
Tracey Shields, Captain/President FSWO, Ottawa Fire Services/Fire Service Women Ontario, Ottawa, ON  
Trevor Brice, Fire Chief, Okotoks Fire & Rescue, Okotoks, AB  
Vince Mackenzie, Fire Chief, Grand Falls-Windsor Fire Department, Grand Falls-Windsor, NL  
Warren Zakus, Fire Chief, Ibex Valley Fire Rescue, Ibex Valley, YT

Check out more information on:



The Great Canadian Fire Census Report



The State of Fire and Emergency Preparedness Systems in Canada Report



Why Canada needs a National Fire Administration

[www.cafc.ca](http://www.cafc.ca)

### More Information

For more information about the CAFC, the materials in this brief, or to reach any of us, please contact CAFC's Executive Director:

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