



Mapping the Future

How the Fire Sector is Expected to Change to 2030 and How We Intend to Respond

A report summarizing the findings and discussions leading up to the CAFC Strategic Plan for 2021-2025.

January 2021

Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs
1 Rideau Street, Suite 700
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 8S7
Tel: 1-800-775-5189
info@cafc.ca | www.cafc.ca





CAFC President
John McKearney

From the CAFC President

It is our pleasure to present this Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) report to accompany and contextualize the CAFC Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. It is entitled *Mapping the Future: How the Fire Sector is Changing to 2030 and How We Intend to Respond*.

We are at the beginning of a new decade; one that started with the difficulties introduced by a pandemic. That difficulty also spurred a new sense of urgency, clarity, and understanding of our vulnerabilities, our opportunities, our purpose and our roles as the fire service.

In this regard, there was no better context to start CAFC's strategic planning process for 2021 to 2025. Members, partners, government and industry delivered on our request for their insights on what CAFC needs to address in the next decade.

In building this strategic plan, we learned about key directions and challenges. We believe many of your departments and organizations are asking the same questions. You will find what we learned here. We hope it will be of value in your own work.

How did what we learn translate for the CAFC? You will find our new strategic plan in this report. It has an updated and more robust mission and vision, one that acknowledges the evolving role of fire departments.

You will also notice that the proposed plan builds off of the success of the 2016 strategic plan. It retains the focus on unity and collaboration. However, it also emphasizes messaging in service of the sector; better policy and research for improving advocacy; programs and services and creating a CAFC for all – whether that is diversity or inclusion, or ensuring that all chiefs and company officers, irrespective of department type or size, see relevance and space for themselves at the CAFC.

We hope that what you read here captures your imagination and inspires you to continue to advance the sector. Please do not underestimate the power of your presence, your voice and your perspective at the CAFC or in our country. If we're not getting it right, tell us. Together, we will create a better future. With a little luck and a lot of effort, we can leave the sector even better than we found it.

Thank you to all who have participated in this initiative; to our members and partners who completed surveys, to staff and to Mr. Paul Sacialloto of Integra Consulting. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our Executive Director Dr. Tina Saryeddine at tsaryeddine@cafc.ca.

Mapping the Future: How the Fire Sector is Expected to Change to 2030 and How We Intend to Respond

Executive Summary

This report accompanies CAFC's new strategic plan for 2021-2025. It describes the views of over 100 experts in our field, from members of fire and emergency management to industry and government. It describes our findings from surveys and key informant interviews, and our internal logic as we updated our mission, vision, pillars and expected outcomes for the next four to five years.

The strategic plan is rooted in the success of the 2016 strategy which came about after the introduction of the new Canada Not-for-profits Corporation Act (CNCA). Its vision was unity. It was primarily concerned with leveraging the fierce power of multiple members, geographic and subsector-specific associations. It guarded against the possibility of multiple geographic regions and affiliate organizations potentially cancelling out the other. The CAFC was therefore built on the shoulders of giants, each of whom through the National Advisory Council (NAC) was willing to work together to create a national association larger than the sum of its parts.

The success of the 2016 plan was evidenced by policy successes in domains like mental health; dangerous goods; building code representation; recognition of volunteer firefighters; new programs and services; a growing membership, a strong national advisory council and a healthy financial status. It was also evidenced in how the 2016 plan allowed new leaders, partners and staff to understand who we are and what we are trying to do.

Building on this success, the CAFC asked members to identify key challenges that the sector would face through to 2030, their expectations of the CAFC, their comments on the mission and vision, and their expectations and recommendations to the national association. These came in the form of surveys and key informative interviews. The results are summarized in the table below, but we encourage those interested to read the details more carefully in this report.

Key Challenges	Expectations of the CAFC	By 2025...
• Shrinking Budgets: departmental and municipal • Cost & Affordability: staff equipment and services • Changing Nature of Work: from fire to all hazards • Sustainability of volunteer department model • Changing Technologies: innovation/new approaches • Continuity Planning: succession and training • Diversity & Inclusion: supply, safety, ethics, culture • Health & Wellness: taking care of front line, mental health, cancer, etc.	• Be the go-to source on fire for the federal government • Have articulated/advocated for "national fire advisor" • Play a leading role in re-shaping the Canadian fire service • Better leverage fire service expertise to influence public policy • Provide a platform for fire service leaders to collaborate • Improve support to provincial, territorial and allied associations • Determine if it redefines itself from "fire" to "fire and emergency services"	• Clarify and create capacity for a national fire advisor • Work with municipalities and their representative associations to help ensure strong municipal budgets and sustainability • Improve the sustainability of the volunteer model • Champion diversity and inclusion across the fire service • Get better at creating/using data in decision making • Provide training and education for leaders • Build a continuity plan for the next generation of leaders

Where will we be by 2025? In the strategic planning summary, you will find our updated vision and mission, and you will see a summary of the outcomes we aspire to achieve under each pillar. It is a tall order, to be approached in sequence over a four-year period, and resulting in the following:

- **A larger and more robust, diverse and inclusive membership in the CAFC;**
- **Programs and services intended for the diversity of members irrespective of department size;**
- **Meaningful structural support for mental health and wellness;**
- **A larger number of individuals with Executive Chief Fire Officer (ECFO) and ECFO Aspire Designations;**
- **A strong community of practice which includes the capacity to engage in joint problem solving;**
- **Recognition and adaptation of key technologies that make the service more sustainable;**
- **Best practices, data and advice to help guide excellence;**
- **Stronger voice of the fire chiefs and emergency leaders with government and with public; and**
- **A clear path towards the best national advice and advisor for fire and emergency management.**

Importantly, our new mission and vision also builds on the 2016 versions. The original vision of *uniting fire service leaders* is expanded to include *fire and emergency management leaders* and to explain that this will be done *in service of public health and safety*. Our new mission assumes that the foundational work of uniting provinces and territories is solidified and as such, broadens the language to *advancing safe, effective and sustainable fire and emergency management services across Canada*.

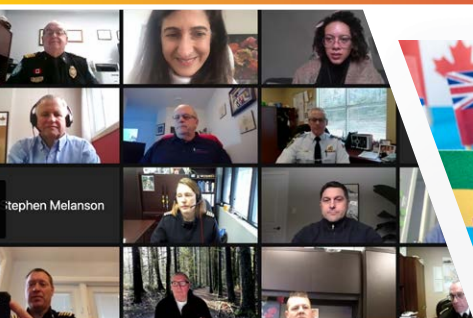
The pillars and outcomes are aligned with addressing the key challenges and again build on the 2016 pillars of **leadership, governance, advocacy and partnership**. They add research and policy to the advocacy arm, and separate out a new pillar for **messaging in the service of our sector**, whether that is with the federal government, municipalities, public or the media. With the view to better serving members, we add a program and services pillar, which will include new member benefits. Finally, building off of the governance pillar is a **CAFC for all**, a pillar through which we seek to ensure every CAFC member or potential member sees relevance and belonging irrespective of size, department type or experience. Each of these pillars is described in terms of specific outcomes.

In January 2021, the CAFC board of directors held a town hall to discuss the proposed CAFC Strategic Plan and selected the activities for focus in year one. We will monitor and adjust, report our outcomes, and stay focussed on our mission. We will trust in the collective advice and intelligence of our members who together have earned the trust of millions of Canadians. We in turn thank you for the trust you have put in the national association and for the opportunity to work on this with you.

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Mapping the Future

1. Setting the Context

1.1 Introduction

Strategic plans need a certain humility. While we believe we've done our due diligence in Mapping the Future for CAFC's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the future is not entirely predictable. As such, what we hope to present here is a strategy that spurs our best and highest purpose; that keeps our members and their needs for their communities front and centre; and that leaves room for strategic thinking as we encounter whatever the future may bring. Time will tell if we got it right, pivoted on time, and readjusted where necessary.

Having said that, we believe the strategic plan you will read about in this document is a plan that takes into account a reasonable effort to assess where we are, who we are, and where we want to be. This applies both to our organization, and since our members are fire and emergency leaders, to the sector.

This report will begin by setting the context, we will then describe the approach, key findings, and then present the strategic plan including a section on "what success looks like".

1.2 Context

We began this strategic plan in Calgary in 2019. It was prefaced by a simple question: Do we need a new strategic plan? The previous strategic plan read 2016-2020 and indeed 2020 was inching upon us. The strategic plan, which was led by a group of CAFC members and Integra Consulting, was primarily a reaction to the changes brought about by the new Canada Not-for-profits Act, which changed the structure of the board. The main concern at the time was ensuring that the many important organizations in the fire service were united in a Canada-wide perspective.

A test of any strategic plan is the extent to which it explains what an organization is and does, the expectations, the opportunities and the buy-in from its membership. The 2016-2020 plan delivered opportunities, buy in of membership, and made it easy for new staff, leaders and partners to come on board and help us execute.

Today we find ourselves in a strong and stable position as an association; not oblivious to our vulnerabilities but positioned to grow, rather than needing repair. It also gave us three operating plans. Its four pillars were associated with outcomes.

Upon review of those outcomes, we recognized their completion to a reasonable extent. While the mission and vision remained valid, and while it was entirely possible to continue with and do better at what was already there, there was the recognition that comfort can bring complacency. It was time to take as embedded what we have learned and achieved. It was time to take on new goals, activities and, to some extent, risks to ensure that we are considering the future.

The Board, the NAC and staff agreed that the same strategic planning consultant would be called upon to lead the process. While some differences were anticipated in the methodology, the pandemic required an entirely new approach, as described in the next section.

1.3 Approach

With COVID cancelling the possibility of in-person meetings, the strategic planning process was designed to accommodate virtual expectations. This brought with it the advantage that all members could participate since there were fewer cost issues than those associated with an in-person session over a few days in a hotel. The process engaged individuals who may not have participated in the past. A list of participants can be found in the Acknowledgements.

We began the process by comparing the 2016 and 2020 contexts for strategic planning. We then developed questions about members', partners' and industry's perceptions about where the sector was heading over the next 10 years, as well as identifying key challenges, top priorities and expectations of the CAFC. We also reviewed key reports from CAFC committees, as well as reports from organizations like the International Association of Emergency Managers, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

A ten-item survey or interview guide was developed. The survey was sent to all members of the association and key informant interviews were requested with each Board and NAC member, as well as with individuals representing different segments within the CAFC membership, such as small rural volunteer departments, new leaders, metro chiefs, women chiefs, industry partners, government, international associations, and consultants.

The views of over 100 individuals were reflected in the process. There were individual interviews, focus groups with committees, and responses from government department staff, such as Public Safety, Transport Canada, and the National Research Council. Responses from international associations including the IAFF and IAFC, as well as partners such as the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CAPC), consultants, members of industry and others were all included in the process.



2. What Will be the Key Challenges to 2030?

In this section, we will discuss key themes arising from respondents about the challenges to 2030. While we will present a list and discuss each of them individually, most of the challenges are, in fact, interlocked and multi-dimensional, often compounding the issue.

2.1 Affordability, Budgets, Costs and Expectations

Nearly everyone who participated in the strategic planning of the CAFC spoke to concerns about affordability, budgets and costs. Under this heading, we heard about pressures on municipal governments, which in turn would affect fire departments. However, we also heard about rising costs and rising expectations. Decreasing municipal budgets, increasing costs, and increased service expectations create the perfect storm of Affordability, Budgets and Costs, the “ABC” problem. We will explore each issue separately.

2.2 Municipalities and Their Budgets

On April 23, 2020, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) asked for \$10 billion to \$15 billion in emergency operating funds from the federal government. Their ask is outlined in a report entitled Protecting Vital Municipal Services. The first example they give in a long list of vital services is police, fire and ambulance. FCM's report argues that the current funding model for municipalities is “fundamentally misaligned with the modern realities of local government roles and the vital services they provide.” It highlights that municipal revenues are limited to user fees and property taxes. During COVID-19, these sources of revenues were compromised.

What are the effects of COVID-19 on municipalities? Municipalities have deferred property taxes. Transit ridership fees, which can make up 30 to 50 per cent of a city's net revenues, are down. Hard hit industries have a cascading effect on city economies, as does the loss of user fees, including city parking. Finally, capital projects fuelling employment and the economy have ground to a halt.

Assuming six months of social distancing, FCM noted that for the largest Canadian cities to bridge 2020 fiscal short-falls without cutting funds, a property tax increase of between 17 and 56 per cent would be required. To address this, FCM asked for \$10 billion in targeted emergency operating funding and additional emergency operating funds for those municipalities that run transit systems.

The FCM's ask came at a time when many CAFC members are watching closely to see how fire departments and public safety budgets will be impacted. Several CAFC members and our U.S. counterparts, have also expressed concerns about fire department budgets.

The CAFC is strongly supportive of FCM's request. The questions are then: will the FCM's ask be granted, in part or in whole, and will the mayors prioritize the country's fire departments, 85 per cent of which are already operating on the precious and precarious assumption that volunteers will continue to meet firefighting needs of many communities?

2.3 Rising Costs of Human Resources

Compounding the problem of shrinking municipal budgets is increasing human resource costs. To address this in the U.S., under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Fire Administration, grants such as Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help them increase the number of trained "front line" firefighters available in their communities so that they can staff in accordance to the National Fire Protection Association Standards.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) Program also enhances the safety of both the public and firefighters with respect to fire-related hazards by providing direct financial assistance to eligible fire departments, non-affiliated Emergency Medical Services organizations, and State Fire Training Academies. This funding is for critically needed resources to equip and train emergency personnel to recognized standards, enhance operations efficiencies, foster interoperability, and support resilience.

Canada has no equivalent of FEMA, U.S. Fire Administration, SAFER or the AFG Program. While in addition, firefighters are among the most generous, trusting and compassionate of professionals per the requirements of the profession, their unions are also well-organized. To their credit, they have organized an effective campaign to maximize their salaries for a difficult and often dangerous job. The consequence for the municipalities is to keep up with these costs. However, it may also create a succession planning problem for fire service management. This will be discussed later.

2.4 Expectations and the Evolving Role of Fire Departments

While the name "fire department" suggests the obvious role of dealing with fires, today's fire departments respond to all hazards, from climate disasters to active shooter incidents, from train derailments to hazardous material response, from high angle technical rescue to water and ice rescue, and from opioid addiction and social issues to emergency medical response and Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (HUSAR). They must also respond to social innovation, caring for vulnerable positions, changing value systems, data analytics, and increasingly complex construction and building product materials.

Most understand this. However, the assumptions and business models that accompany this knowledge have not kept up. Without due consideration to the changing nature of the fire department, we risk insufficient community risk assessment, insufficient resources, and tragically, insufficiently trained and equipped individuals to respond when disaster strikes.

Training and equipment are vehicles to what CAFC's past president Ken Block termed "intentional calmness" in the capacity to respond safely and efficiently to disaster, mitigate mental health injury, and reduce the incidence of presumptive illnesses. These concerns discourage individuals from entering the fire service and could compound future issues. By contrast, well trained, prepared and resourced fire departments bring reward at the personal, professional, social, technical and economic level.

The issue becomes more pronounced when we compound with emergency, the economic and environmental impacts of innovation and disaster. The conversation is not about the cost of the fire department, but the cost of inaction when we consider the lives, jobs, productivity and revenues lost, and the consequences of, for example, carbon emissions.

Recruitment, resources, training and community risk assessment are four requirements in the modern fire service. The CAFC's report entitled *Redefining Fire* will tell the story of how fire departments used education, prevention and training to reduce the incidence of fire, while being prepared to manage and respond to other emergencies when needed using similar skill sets.

2.5 Capital, Equipment, Technology and Training

Capital and equipment costs add to the affordability, budgets, and costs problem. In this regard, there are at least two issues. The first is the depreciation of the current supply of capital and equipment. Fire Department equipment is not cheap. A pumper can cost close to \$1 million, while a single helmet is upwards of \$600.

Compounding the depreciation problem are the expectations around new technologies. Yet, federal programs intended to defray the cost of critical infrastructure, like the Airport Capital Program and the Gas Tax Fund, have excluded the eligibility of fire department infrastructure. The Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) was also sunset in 2013 because of beliefs that the objectives had been met. Funding was moved to other important areas such as critical infrastructure and urban search and rescue.

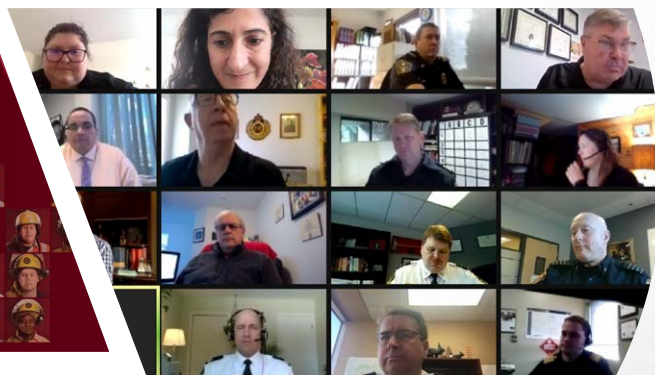
However, in the years since the sunset of this program, new needs have emerged. The role and expectations of the fire department have been evolving to respond to multiple hazards. The country's urban, rural and volunteer fire departments are raising money for projects that used to fit under JEPP, while still other needs emerge. While we are conscious of the role of the federal government, we offer that if 85 per cent of the country's fire departments are already volunteer, it would become an issue of national security if we did not take multiple measures to help sustain them.

It is especially important to consider that as we modernize infrastructure and invest in building and societal innovation, we also have to invest in public safety innovation. This relates to a second issue around the appropriate procurement, adoption and use of technologies in practice. There will likely come a time where the expectation of robotics and artificial intelligence could make the idea of an individual running into a compromised structure fall way outside of reasonable scope of practice. It sounds futuristic, but it is important to consider how we begin to stay ahead of the technology.

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2.6 Sustainability of Volunteer Department Model

Eighty-five per cent of Canada's Fire Service consists of trained volunteer firefighters. These are individuals whose primary employment is not firefighting, but who do so for the benefit of their communities. This is a precious and necessary expression of love of country at the level of the individual, but it is a precarious policy.

While volunteer firefighting is what it says – a form of volunteerism – there are three important differences from most volunteer jobs. The first is qualification. Volunteer firefighters are people who have invested in and in whom society has invested in training. The second is risk. Volunteer firefighting, like any type of firefighting, involves a high level of mental, physical and emotional stamina. The third is some form of remuneration, which recognizes the immense personal and familial contributions of these individuals.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the remuneration and recognition of volunteer firefighters was highlighted because the initial eligibility requirements for Employment Insurance (EI) and the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) programs were to have no income and no hours of work. In most provinces, to ensure that volunteer firefighters are covered for on-the-job issues through workers' compensation programs, volunteer firefighters are considered employees for that purpose only. Second, because of the honoraria, pay on call, or standby pay they receive, volunteer firefighters receive some income, albeit not a liveable wage. In addition, in recent months, many volunteer firefighters are finding it difficult to claim the volunteer firefighter tax credit because of issues with the definition of volunteer firefighter which may lead to audit issues.

However, at the heart of these problems is a potentially deeper issue which is this: Is the model of reliance on volunteer firefighting wise? Are we losing volunteer firefighters as we move through generations? Do we know how many we have? When we recruit them, can we retain them and, more importantly, can we protect them? In other words, is the model sustainable? Now is the time to start asking these questions.

2.7 Culture, Continuity, Collaboration, Inclusiveness, Diversity and Shifting Paradigms

In the context of costs and sustainability of the volunteer model, we talked about human resources. However, there is yet another dimension to this problem relating to fire service leadership.

Consider a situation where the most experienced firefighters may be full-time unionized individuals who have honed skills full time over many years. They may also have developed leadership skills as company officers. When these individuals reach the top of their game within the union, a next logical step might be to enter management.

Unfortunately, some are dis-incentivized from following the management path because of a poor risk-reward scenario. While the salaries of management may be attractive, the lack of union protection, plus the responsibilities, accountabilities and difficulties associated with high pressure leadership positions can cause discouragement.

This not only creates a “numbers” problem, it can also result in possible exclusion of top candidates unless those individuals are willing to take the added pressure.

This strategic plan also comes in the aftermath of the George Floyd and Joyce Echaquan tragedies, and three years after the election of the first woman board member on the CAFC Board of Directors. It also comes in the wake of several very significant appointments of women chiefs to key leadership positions in our country, including Chief Fry in Vancouver, Chief Henry at Calgary Emergency Management Agency, and many others.

There is a sense in the fire service that we are far beyond employment equity and affirmative action. People need to “see” what they can “be.” There is no apology for the purposeful seeking of diversity, bluntly and explicitly.

The strength of this expectation comes to a sector that may be currently homogeneous. It comes from knowing that unless we address this issue, public safety will suffer and we will not have the supply of leaders needed for the future.

Finally, under this theme comes the issue of collaboration, partnerships and new models or paradigms. This included interprofessional collaboration across multiple professions and sectors. It considers the evolving role of fire chief and chief officer in all hazard response and as an emergency management leader.



2.8 Health & Wellness: Taking Care of the Front Line, Mental Health, Musculoskeletal Injuries

Concerns around mental and physical health are paramount in any future strategic plan of the CAFC. The profession has its risks, whether on a volunteer basis or on a full-time basis.

As far back as 2012, members of the CAFC passed a resolution to make the mental health of first responders a key advocacy issue. By 2016, the then Minister of Public Safety held a round table discussion on mental health with the national public safety associations and other first responder groups. The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) was also pilot testing its Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) program in fire departments. MHCC then began to sell the program at cost across the country. Renowned public safety mental health researcher Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton, the Tri Service Chiefs associations, and a former Department of National Defence (DND) staff person, Steve Palmer, also started the Canadian Institute of Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT) of which the CAFC was a founding partner. In 2017, members of the CAFC reconfirmed that mental health must remain a topmost policy priority.

To translate this into “boots on the ground,” the CAFC stepped up the mental health ask made of the federal government and requested \$2.5 million to offset the MHCC’s program delivery model to the Fire Service. It is important to note that the CAFC has no business interest in the R2MR program. The CAFC requested it because (1) it was familiar to the fire service; (2) it had a long track record of safe use by both DND and the Navy Seals; and (3) it was administered by a federally established not-for-profit, which made an ask from the CAFC to the federal government more logical than asking the federal government to fund a private company or other not-for-profit.

In 2018, the federal budget had dedicated \$30 million to the advancement of research and treatment for public safety personnel through CIPSRT and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The funding included \$15 million for CIHR to host three research competitions, \$10 million for CIPSRT to administer internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy, and \$5 million for a knowledge exchange hub at the University of Regina. Since then, 30 grant opportunities have been made available with the first 22 projects completed in May 2020. As of August 2020, there remains \$3 million of CIHR ring-fenced money available.

Todd Doherty’s Bill C-2114, “An Act to Establish a National Framework on PTSD and Mental Health Challenges with First Responders, Veterans and Military,” was passed by the Senate in June 2018. The bill required the federal government to work with the provinces, territories and members of the medical

community to create a federal framework to fully address post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), from recognizing symptoms to treatment. The report is now available. Its translation is yet to be seen.

The federal government also took two additional measures that were less publicized. Prior to the 2018 budget and announcement, the federal government made funds available for two pilot sessions whereby individuals from each of the public safety sectors would have access to R2MR training from DND and would be asked to spread and scale their training. CIPSRT ran the program. The idea was for nine individuals in fire to pay it forward. There was no formal tracking and it was unclear if the experiment would work. To date, over 1,000 individuals have been trained through this program.

After the March 2017 Halifax tragedy, Edmonton, Halifax, Red Deer, and the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia began to explore how they could bring training to Halifax and Nova Scotia, and CIPSRT stepped in to provide another \$50,000 in support for the departments' costs.

Where are we today? The first tranche of mental health funding from the federal government is nearly spent. We will need to look at how translation of the investments occur. We are anticipating an electronic version of mental health awareness training programs. We are asking for a greater and more concrete effort in suicide prevention.

2.9 Data & Analytics: A Better Business Case, Supporting Decision-Making

For some time now, members have been calling on the CAFC to provide better data. There are a few reasons for this. First of all, we need a minimum dataset at the national level to improve advocacy and the narrative. Second, we need to help departments better present the business case at the municipal level. Third, we need to establish benchmarks and comparators. Fourth, we need economic impact data. This will help tell the story of the fire service and the all-hazard role it plays.

2.10 Additional Policy Challenges

Through the strategic planning process, a number of additional policy issues were identified, especially in focus groups with committees, that should be addressed. Traditionally, these policy issues would be identified in the operating plan. However, since so much of the fire service's success depends on successfully addressing these challenges, we have included them as part of this strategic planning document. The policy issues include:

- **Access to Funding and Ensuring Fire Department Eligibility**
- **Sprinklers and Building Codes**
- **Public Safety Broadband**
- **Search and Rescue, Drones and New Technology**
- **Dangerous Goods**
- **Cost/ROI of Fire**
- **Wildland Urban Interface**
- **Trend Watch/Risk Management**

3. Expectations of the National Association

How the CAFC performs depends in large part on the expectations of its members. In this section, we discuss what members expect of the CAFC as a national association.

Uniting the field: When the CAFC took shape after the new Canada Not-for-profits Corporation Act, the key challenge was to unite the field. With everyone's effort, particularly that of the Board and the NAC, the CAFC "came together." What does this mean? It means that the close to 25 different fire-related organizations representing geographic areas or subsectors within fire came together through the NAC of the CAFC, while retaining a membership model that ensured the voice of individual fire chiefs could be heard. The importance of the NAC cannot be over-stated and was at the heart of the 2016 strategic plan. Strategically, the NAC ensures that the efforts of each of the associations representing a specific province, territory or sector within the fire service is never undermined by varying messages from others. The development-of-consensus approach, while recognizing diversity and allowing for differences, is a crucial element of CAFC's potential and remit as a national association. As a national association, the CAFC belongs to the membership. The expectation is for the CAFC to carry out the mandate of the united voice of the membership.

Doing together what we can't do alone: The advantage of uniting across organizations is the capacity to do more together than any one organization might do on its own. This is about leveraging all voices and coming to consensus and agreement. It also means identifying national opportunities, services and information; leveraging the provinces and territories; collaborating across boundaries and silos; and providing a national data bank.

Advice on fire and emergency management: Members also expect that the federal government and partners will become more aware of the national association that the membership has built. Through the CAFC, members are willing to be the go-to on fire and emergency management leadership. Where does the "and emergency management" come from? Despite the name "Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs," many if not most members of the CAFC are also heavily entrenched as emergency management leaders. This became especially obvious during the pandemic.

As it pertains to the federal government, members of the CAFC expressed concerns about a policy vacuum that has occurred. Many individuals in key leadership positions do not have a background in fire and emergency management. The individuals who are aware of this tend to reach out for advice when necessary. However, there is still work to be done to help leaders understand the gap.

Once the gap is understood, there are three ways to address it, which were discussed through the strategic planning process. These relate to the concept of a national fire advisor. During our discussions with the membership, it became very clear that there are multiple conceptualizations of a national fire advisor. The first conceptualization is similar to a U.S. Fire Administrator.

National advice, national advisor and national fire administrator: Throughout the strategic planning process, we heard on several occasions the need for a national fire advisor. Notwithstanding a resolution passed in 2012 and various articles by members, we learned that there are multiple conceptualizations of what members mean by this.

As part of the strategic planning process, we began to unpack these options and asked members what options they envisioned when they spoke to the notion of a national fire advisor. We learned that the majority of our members used the term “national fire advisor” to refer to the equivalent of a national fire administrator as per the model used in the U.S. As we began to understand this, we looked at what was involved. What were the functions of the national fire advisor? What type of budget did he or she have? What infrastructure surrounded the office?

The U.S. fire administrator is embedded within Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the U.S. The mission of the U.S. Fire Administration is to support and strengthen fire and emergency service stakeholders to prepare for, prevent, mitigate and respond to all hazards. Its key areas of activities are prevention, training, operations, data and grants. Its budget is \$49 million, which, if we scaled per capita from the U.S. to Canada, would be about \$4.9 million. FEMA has a mission to help people before, during and after disasters. It aspires to a culture of preparedness, which involves investments, insurance gaps, helping people prepare, learning from past disasters, and readying the nation for catastrophe including workforce, equipment, government coordination and communication. It also aims at reducing complexity. FEMA’s budget is \$18 billion, which if scaled would be \$1.8 billion in Canada.

This is in contrast to a conceptualization of a fire advisor as a federal employee who would provide liaison, like a Chief Science Advisor or dominion Fire Marshall without the infrastructure of FEMA or U.S. fire administration. The challenge with this model is influence. The position might exist, but it may not have resources or influence.

The table below discusses the two models:

	Federal Employee	National Fire Administrator
What is it?	One person or an office in the federal gov. whose job it is to provide advice, maybe leverage resources	In the U.S., it is part of FEMA and it gives grants, operational support, data and messaging
Why do we want it?	We want to connect across departments and have content expertise, raising our profile nationally and in decision making	We want the resources, the data, grants, operational supports, public messaging, centralized intelligence
What are the Pros?	Common point person/office, perhaps leverage funds and raise profile	Allows new resources and intergovernmental coordination that may not be available
What are the Cons?	Not every federal office has influence. Will the office speak to the sector? Will it replace it? Will they reflect diversity? Will they provide good advice?	Success of the office will depend on resources and execution work with jurisdictional roles of provinces and territories
Could members do this?	While we are not in the federal government, our committees could become advisors to departments, i.e., dangerous goods, NAC, etc.	CAFC could help to administer the programs but it would require funding

The third model discussed was the notion of a national fire advisory secretariat which would position the CAFC as the national association and a type of advisor. CAFC would need to develop and “earn” the reputation and the resources to go with it. In regard to such a model, the FCM was examined as a case study. The national association representing mayors has a billion-dollar budget and partners in the administration of federal programs to municipalities.

As we discussed this with the Board and the NAC, the conclusion was that the three models were not mutually exclusive. Two of the models are “an ask”; those that involve asking the federal government to do something. The third model is a state of being. It will involve an ask, but it will also involve “acting as if” and growing in the direction of our choosing.

Intelligent Infrastructure: Diversity is recognized within the CAFC. One size does not fit all. This leads to the idea of “intelligent infrastructure” whereby the CAFC by design ensures that the voice of an individual speaking for the CAFC is representative and amplified. The importance of committees, the NAC, and other organizations speak to this. With a systematic and informed voice, CAFC will be better positioned to play a leading role in re-shaping the Canadian Fire Service. It can do this by leveraging through leaders in the field and helping to spread and scale ideas and innovation. This also requires the use of technology to unite the membership and allow for networking and discussion groups as well as committees and forums for collaboration. The idea of an intelligent infrastructure is in its bidirectionality; it is as much about the flow of information *from* the membership *to* the flow of information *to* the membership. This helps ensure good advice is provided in consultations.

Leveraging the voice of Canada’s Fire Chiefs: Another theme that accompanied the phenomena of immense talent and professionalism within the CAFC membership is the capacity to influence public safety through messaging in service of safety. CAFC’s social messaging has to date been “internally focussed.” With a more deliberate and organized focus, we can leverage the voice of the membership in service of public safety. This will involve more use of social media and communications acumen.

Provide standards, data and education for executives: One of the most important programs within the CAFC is the Executive Chief Fire Officer program. The program offers an opportunity to demonstrate key competencies that are of relevance in all parts of the country. It is portable and establishes a standard of practice that municipalities and other jurisdictions may wish to seek. Related to the issue of standards of practice, data and education is the ability for CAFC to bring educational solutions to the membership in key areas. For example, products that help to address commonly experienced issues such as in labour relations, policy and procedure development and others would be welcomed.



The Summary of CAFC's New Strategic Plan appears on page 19 of this report.

4. Towards a New Strategic Plan

With due diligence and consultation, an environmental scan, and significant discussion with members and partners, including the NAC and the Board, the CAFC landed its proposed strategic plan for 2021. As we introduce the plan, readers may wonder, what will be different about this plan? In many respects, the plan builds off the success of the previous strategic plan 2016-2020, adding several factors to it.

When we asked members about the mission and vision of the CAFC, many said that they were appropriate statements but that they needed more clarification. The vision statement needed a "destination" beyond uniting. In other words, uniting for a purpose. Building off of the 2016 vision, members asked the CAFC to qualify the vision of uniting our leaders towards something not operational, but inspirational. That "something" is now defined in the new vision statement. It is uniting "in service of public health and safety."

The original mission statement, which was appropriately and profoundly focussed on what translated into the creation of the NAC, also needed to move beyond uniting provinces and territories now that this is stable and well in hand. The mission statement is therefore expanded to include not only uniting provinces and territories, but advancing a sustainable system across all communities.

The new mission statement is also expanded beyond the namesake of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs. Our bylaws have always made emergency management leaders eligible for membership in the CAFC. What members will notice in the new strategic plan is the explicit recognition of the role of fire chief as an emergency management leader engaged in all hazard response. It's not a shift in what we were doing, but it is an explicit shift in the language.

As readers move through the mission and vision towards the core pillars of the association or the key business lines, the 2016 pillars of governance, training, advocacy and partnerships remain pertinent, however, they become enablers to a more outward-looking plan. Again, we are working with the assumption that the ground work has been laid. If we find them destabilized, we will continue to work on the original pillars. They are, however, seen as enablers.

What are the new externally-focussed pillars? Readers will note that the advocacy pillar is now coupled with policy and research. Strong advocacy case is achieved through excellent information, communication, analysis and relationships. A new pillar entitled "messaging in service of the sector" brings a more communications-focussed approach to amplifying our messages, whether they are for the government, the public, the provinces and territories through the NAC members, or with media and municipalities.

Accompanying these two externally-focussed pillars are pillars that are focussed on the members of the CAFC. This integrates programs and services for members such as the Executive Chief Fire Officer (ECFO) program, Red Book, etc. The final pillar marries the external and internal and is about creating a "CAFC for all." It is about ensuring that everyone finds a place at the CAFC. During this strategic plan, we heard very concerning comments about perceptions of who the CAFC is for. The CAFC is for leaders in fire and emergency management. There is no "too big" or "too small"; everyone is "just right."

Strategic Plan Summary

	VISION	Canada's fire and emergency management leaders united in service of public health and safety.		
	MISSION	Advancing safe, effective, and sustainable fire and emergency services across Canada.		
	PILLARS & OUTCOMES			
Messaging in Service of Sector	Advocacy, Policy and Research	Programs and Services	A United, Informed CAFC for All	
• Government Relations: CAFC, members, NAC and government departments are working jointly, meaningfully and with some resources (1) • Social Media: Leveraged the voice of fire chiefs in messaging to the fire service, government and public (1) • News from the NAC: NAC is fully supported in its ability to communicate and advise to and from their members (1) • National Policy List/GR Book: We have an up-to-date list of national policies across domains for government relations (1) • Safety Messaging for Public: We've supported leadership in fire prevention and emergency management (1) • Rebranding Fire: The all-hazard nature and capacity of the fire service understood (1) • Municipalities: Municipalities have greater information on fire departments, pressure points and the CAFC	• National Fire Advisor: Clarified role of 'a FEMA' in Canada, a national fire advisor and own role • Access to Funding: Advocated for access to Gas Tax, Airport Capital Fund, JEPP, etc. (1) • Sprinklers: Incentives known (1). Sprinklers are required in all new residential construction • Building Codes: CAFC member views are reflected in the codes • Public Safety Broadband: We've advanced access to a PSBN • Search and Rescue: There is interoperability between SAR and Fire Departments/HUSAR • Dangerous Goods: Supported e-shipping pilot Dangerous Goods Transportation(1) • Cost/ROI of Fire: Establish business case and metrics for fire departments (1) • New Technologies: Embraced new technologies and funding streams for their adaptation • Sustaining Volunteer Sector: Snapshot of the number and distribution of volunteers (1) • Mental Health: Meaningful supports have been provided, suicide prevention, women's health • Wildland Urban Interface: Providing balanced perspective in education, policy, planning initiatives • Trend Watch and Risk Management: We are staying ahead of trends and risks	• Red Book: Updated Red Book of policies and procedures (1) • Executive Chief Fire Officer: Increased number of ECFOs and ECFO Aspiring holder (1) • Mentorship: Provided mentorship to emerging leaders • Best practices: Provided best practice support for D&I and HR issues • Answer the Call: Re-invigorated Answer the Call campaign (1) • Fire-Rescue Canada: We have provided an annual conference and webinars (1) • Research Roster: We have provided access to and liaison with researchers • Training: We have provided access to training programs that help departments • Spotlight on Industry: Interface between industry and the fire service (1) • National Dataset: Key data points achieved (1)	• Succession Planning: Campaign to ensure diverse and sufficient workforce • Diversity and inclusion: Diversity has increased in the CAFC and fire service and the principles of diversity are better understood and actioned (1) • Everyone Under the Tent: Increased fire and emergency services leaders under the CAFC tent, FR use, and made it easier for members re national/prov/intl (1) • Divisions: Where needed, specialized streams within the CAFC to ensure inclusion, ex., Women Chiefs, Fire Prevention and Airport and Industry, Volunteer Rural, Metro Chiefs, etc. • Intelligent Infrastructure: Organizations called upon to get key messages out to the fire service and seek feedback to and from, trend watching (1) • Leveraging Expertise: Strong Committees solve problems, identify solutions, give advice (1) • Connecting Members: Provided a platforms/opportunities for fire chiefs and company officers to connect for peer support and best practices (1) • Emergency Management: Establish a community of practice for EOC leaders (1)	
Enablers: organizational excellence, financial sustainability, membership services, communications, website and database, staffing, effective government relations, stakeholder management, newsletter, magazine, directory, board and management evaluation and growth, business and sustainability model, brand control and partnership effectiveness.				

(1) denotes year one activities



5. What Success Looks Like, Conclusions and Next Steps

Where will we be at the end of CAFC's strategic plan, i.e., by 2025? In the strategic planning summary, you will see a summary of the outcomes we aspire to achieve under each pillar. It is a tall order. The items in the strategic plan will be approached in sequence.

At a high level, however, we hope to see the following:

- **A larger, more robust, diverse and inclusive membership in the CAFC;**
- **Programs and services intended for the diversity of members, irrespective of department size;**
- **Meaningful structural support for mental health and wellness;**
- **A larger number of individuals with executive chief fire officer and aspire designations;**
- **A strong community of practice which includes the capacity to engage in joint problem solving;**
- **Recognition and adaptation of key technologies that make the service more sustainable;**
- **Best practices, data and advice to help guide excellence;**
- **Stronger voice of the fire chiefs and emergency leaders with government and with public; and**
- **A clear path towards the best national advice and advisor for fire and emergency management.**

As next steps, the CAFC board of directors held a town hall to discuss the overall CAFC Strategic Plan and select the activities for focus in year one. We will monitor and adjust, report our outcomes and stay focussed on our mission. We will trust in the collective advice and intelligence of you, our members, who together have earned the trust of millions of Canadians. We in turn thank you for the trust you have put in the national association and for the opportunity to work on this with you.

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Acknowledgements

The CAFC would like to acknowledge the many members and partners who participated in this strategic planning study. They include the following:

Adam Palmer, Vancouver Police Chief and past President of the Canadian Association of Chief of Police

Anabel Therrien, Manager of Membership & Special Projects of the CAFC

Benoit Turcotte and the team at Transportation Canada's Dangerous Goods Directorate

Brad Yochim, Fire Chief of the Wallace District Fire Department

Broderick Moore, Deputy Chief of the Leduc Fire Services

Chantal Bibeau, Chef de Division of the Service de sécurité incendie de Laval

Charlene Jordan-Jones, Director, Fire & Safety Division of the Justice Institute of BC

Chris Case, Fire Chief of the Chatham-Kent Fire and Emergency Services

Chris Reynolds, Deputy Fire Chief of the Golden Horn Volunteer Fire Department

Dan Derby, Fire Chief of the Kootenay Boundary Regional Fire Rescue
Dan Heney, Regional Deputy Chief of the Bonnyville Regional Fire Authority
Dan McCoy, Deputy Chief of the Kennebecasis Valley Fire Department
Daniel Perron, Fire Prevention Coordinator
Dave McKinley, Assistant Deputy Chief of the Fredericton Fire Department
Dave Mitchell, Dave Mitchell and Associates Emergency Management Consultants
Gary Ludwig, President of the Indigenous Association of Fire Chiefs
Gordon Routley, Assistant Director of the Montreal Fire Department
Graham Pawlett, President of the Canadian Volunteer Fire Service Association
John Lane, Fire Chief Winnipeg of the Fire Paramedic Service
John McKearney, Fire Chief of the Whistler Fire Rescue Service
Joy MacDermid, Researcher at McMaster University
Ken McMullen, Fire Chief of the Red Deer Emergency Services
Keri Martens, Deputy Chief of the Canmore Fire Rescue
Kevin Eskra, Fire Chief of the SAFC
Larry Thomas, Fire Chief of the City of Surrey Fire Service
Laura Aiken, Editor of Firefighting in Canada
Mario Berthiaume, Deputy Fire Chief of the Miramichi Fire
Matthew Pegg, Fire Chief & General Manager of Emergency Management of the Toronto Fire Services
Michael Seth, Director/Fire Chief of the Cape Breton Regional Fire and Emergency Services
Monty Armstrong, Deputy Chief of the Guelph Fire Department
Morgan Hackl, Fire Chief of the Saskatoon Fire Department
Nadya-Lyse Pare, Assistant Chief of the Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency
Nouredine Benichou of the National Research Council
Patrick Goupil, Directeur of the Beupre Fire Department
Paul Hutt, Deputy Fire Chief of the City of Ottawa
Peter Krich, Fire Chief of the City of Camrose Fire Department
Phil Lemire, Fire Chief of the Fire Chiefs Association of BC
Pierre Voisine, Director of the City of Clarence-Rockland
Randy Schroeder, Fire Chief of the Lac Ste. Anne County Fire Services
Renewable Energy Systems
Richard Amnotte, Fire Chief, VP Fire Prevention of the Securite Incendie - Ville de Levis
Rod Montgomery, Fire Chief of the Moose Jaw Fire Department
Russ Sanders of the National Fire Protection Association
Ryan Hunt and the team at the Public Safety Canada's Critical Infrastructure Branch



Ryan Hunter, Fire Chief of the Swift Current Fire Department
Scott Marks, Assistant to the General President of the International Association of Fire Fighters
Sean Tracey, Retired Deputy Chief of the Ottawa Fire Services
Steve Dongworth, Fire Chief of the Calgary Fire Department
The Answer the Call Committee of the CAFC
The Best Practices Committee of the CAFC
The Building Code Committee of the CAFC
The Diversity & Inclusion Committee of the CAFC
The Drones Committee of the CAFC
The ECFO Committee of the CAFC
The Interoperability Committee of the CAFC
The Membership Committee of the CAFC
The Nominations & Bylaws Committee of the CAFC
The Women Chiefs Group of the CAFC
Thomas Jukes, Deputy Regional Fire Chief of the Wheatland County Fire Services
Troy Mutch, Edmonton Fire Service
Vince Conrad, Director of Training and Professional Development, Halifax Regional Fire Authority