



Honourable Minister Sean Fraser
Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

June 16, 2024

Dear Honourable Minister Fraser,

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) would like to begin this letter by thanking you for supporting our request to increase the Volunteer Firefighter Tax Credit in Budget 2024. We have always been aware and extremely appreciative of your support of Canada's fire services.

Today, we are writing to commend and discuss the Federal Budget's commitment on page 54 to consult with fire safety experts on housing related issues like single egress, secondary suites, and other commitments to increase rapid housing development across the country.

We are pleased to hear that the National Research Council (NRC) will be leading an evidence-informed single egress consultation beginning later this summer and look forward to participating. It is important that these processes remain objective and free of political pressures.

A few weeks ago Minister, we noted a video prepared by BC Housing and circulated by your office on social media with your question about the possible safety of single egress housing. This came out shortly after a commentary by the Globe and Mail editors endorsing single egress.

Honourable Minister, in the absence of a National Fire Administration, we would like to share our view that in the wake of a housing crisis, models in other countries that have contingencies not present here, and with the current enthusiasm of architects and industry, it may be tempting to lean into single egress as a silver bullet.

However, as discussed around minute 8 of the 12-minute video you shared, unless accompanied by the same contingencies present in Europe and informed by the real time fire experience, this could be maladaptive from a safety, housing, and economic perspective. You will likely have noted that one of the safety contingencies for single egress in Europe include the overwhelming presence of brick and concrete over wood construction.

Honourable Minister, this is only one example of an issue where the Federal Government, the public, industry, and the fire sector, would all benefit from the presence of National Fire Administration. The intersection of fire safety with national issues are not topics for arm-chair commentary. They can be issues of life and death for the public and for our firefighters, especially in an already fire prone environment.

A National Fire Administration could work with the federal government and all parties on solutions to the housing crisis without introducing or politicizing practices like single egress which would either be unsafe in the current context or require contingencies that may polarize builders and some Canadian industries.

Our colleagues in the US, UK, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan all have National Fire Administrations. We believe our elected officials should never be in the position of having to mediate fire safety conversations without an office directly responsible and accountable for the advice given to you, scientifically, socially, practically, and economically. Attached you will find a draft commentary that further explains our views.

We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss our proposal for the rapid implementation of a national fire administration as well as other fire safety considerations in Canada's effort to address the housing crisis. The CAFC's Executive Director, Dr. Tina Saryeddine will contact your office to see if this is possible and is also available at tsaryeddine@cafc.ca or 613-324-1078.

Finally Honourable Minister, you and/or your staff are also always welcomed to the Canadian Association of Fire Chief Building Codes Committee or National Advisory Council to consult on any issues. Thank you again for considering our views and championing the issue of safe and affordable housing for all Canadians. We truly appreciate your support and openness to our comments.

Sincerely,



Chief Ken McMullen, CAFC President

Honourable Minister François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

Attached: Draft Commentary