



Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Fire Services

Enhancing Fire services in Newfoundland & Labrador Since 1964

Honourable Ministers of the Social Policy Committee and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador:

Firstly, we would like to thank you for once again allowing us to present for your consideration, a list of high priority issues that currently affect the fire services in our province.

Through our annual brief we have made much progress in addressing the issues that have an impact on all fire services in our province. With this continued partnership The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services feels very confident that together we will continue to be successful.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services represents approximately 6000 firefighters, paid and volunteer. Our board is made up of 6 elected volunteer Directors, an elected volunteer President and two paid staff, our provincial Learn Not to Burn Coordinator and Executive Director.

The topics discussed in this brief have been compiled through analysis of existing, current and forecasted conditions, reviewing our history and operations, continuing education and direct feedback from our membership and other stakeholders.

Contained in this document, you will find the topics requiring immediate attention, topics requiring future attention and topics our association is currently addressing.

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Issues requiring immediate attention:

1. Fire Inspection of high risk structures

Fire inspection of high risk structures continues to be a challenge. In past briefs we have discussed this issue and we believe that with a continued commitment from Government we can collaboratively find an acceptable solution. Therefore:

Our Association respectfully asks that government review, recommend and implement a comprehensive policy to ensure annual fire inspections of high risk/ major occupancy buildings such as schools, hospitals, personal care homes, hotels, and places of public assembly.

Our Association has identified this issue as one of the most critical issues facing the fire service today.

Presently these inspections are left to local fire departments. This brings with it several challenges that in many cases result in inspections not being completed, being incomplete or functionally ineffective. Some of the challenges include but are not limited to:

- Working with local building or business owners can prove to be very difficult due to personal relationships placing undue stress on a volunteer inspector.
- Today's volunteers in rural areas of our province are not always fortunate enough to work in their own community. Thereby restricting both their availability to perform inspections and attend training to develop the skills required. This is especially true for those who commute to large construction projects around and outside our province.
- In the case of volunteer firefighters who are not confident they have obtained enough education and/or experience to be effective, the realistic fear of legal ramifications must also be recognized.

By working in a collaborative manner we believe our Association and Fire and Emergency Services could successfully find solutions to most inspection issues.

2. Cost Sharing Program for Fire Trucks/ Equipment Funding

At current funding levels the number of apparatus and the amount of equipment being funded is far outweighed by the amount becoming unreliable and unsafe. Therefore our Association recommends that:

If we continue to allocate funding as in the past a financial commitment of \$6 million dollars per year over a 10 year period will fix the aging fleet of vehicles in our province.

Our Association would like to thank the government for recognizing our position on the cost sharing and purchasing arrangements. However we would still hereby request the inclusion of purchasing used vehicles to address the needs of all fire departments and allow the flexibility required in order to address more requests.

Below are examples of past funding models. As can be seen this program requires immediate attention because previous funding levels have failed to meet the needs identified.

2011-12 - \$3.9 million allocated for fire trucks, \$1 million for equipment

2012-13 - Funding reduced to core levels of \$1.7 million, \$500,000 for equipment

2013-14 - Core funding levels maintained at \$1.7 million, equipment funding cut to \$380,000

2014-15 - \$5 million allocated to fire trucks and \$1 million for equipment

2015-16 - \$5.7 million allocated to fire trucks and \$1 million for equipment

2016-17 - \$1.5 million for fire trucks and \$380,000 for equipment

2017-18 - \$1.5 million for fire trucks and \$380,000 for equipment

While we certainly realize the position government is in with limited revenue, it still does not erase our current challenges. In fact our challenges will certainly increase exponentially as time goes by if funding continues to be inadequate. We believe that through open and transparent consultation we can assist our government to make responsible decisions even in such challenging times. We urge you to increase the minimum funding allotments to reduce the long lists of funding requests. We would like to work with government to develop an implementation plan that addresses the issues identified above.

3. Critical Incident Stress Management for Emergency Responders

Much work has been done between our Association and Fire and Emergency Services. Our Association has received funding, public and private that has seen trained responders placed on the east coast of Labrador, the eastern region and in central regions of our province. We have also committed funding to address the concerns of the Northern Peninsula and west coast of the province. Having people in place at strategic locations will reduce the wait times for those in need and our Association will continue to seek private funding to continue this valuable work.

Having trained responders is only one piece of this much larger undertaking. Although a tremendous amount of work has been done with CISM in our province, more needs to be done and our Association is committed to ensuring that this work is complete.

We would like to thank the government for partnering with us to address the serious issue of CISM in our province.

4. Vehicle Extrication Services

On main thoroughfares in our province we are dependent mostly on volunteer fire departments to provide vehicle extrication services when required. The equipment required is very expensive and in some cases the departments willing to provide this valuable service must fundraise, taking months to replace worn out or damaged equipment. To ensure that the best possible service is provided to travelers on our highways and to relieve the financial stress placed on volunteer fire departments to provide this valuable service we therefore ask that:

Government commit to work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services to develop a highway response strategy to ensure that a 10 year training and funding program is developed to see that key area departments have the ability to train and have access to a funding program to replace equipment on a scheduled basis or when an emergency breakdown occurs.

Significant Challenges Ahead

The fire services of our province have other significant challenges that require our collective attention.

Regionalization

Our Association strongly agrees that efficiencies can be realized if we begin to work together. Examples can be seen on the success of regionalization by fire departments in this province such as the Bay de Grave Regional Fire Department, The Straits Fire Department and the Grand Falls-Windsor Fire Department. We encourage cooperation and further suggest to government to make incentives for communities to explore and regionalize fire services where it can be effective.

Hazardous Materials Emergency Response

Fire and Emergency Services has put tremendous effort into this issue. We wish to expand our first responder's safety and response by partner with the government to implement a Hazardous Materials Reporting System that will ensure all businesses report their hazardous materials to the local fire departments. We strongly encourage Government to continue to work towards an effective and sustainable program.

Emergency Responder Safety

Our Association has been firmly committed to the safety of our responders. Since 2009 our Association has developed a firefighter fit testing program, provided instructors and maintained a loaner program to ensure all fire departments have the opportunity to keep their people safe while responding. We have also introduced a *Safety Advisory Committee*

to assist fire departments with safety issues and advice at no cost. Our Association has also developed a gas detection awareness training course and we will continue to work with Fire and Emergency Services and Occupational Health and Safety to identify issues and solutions to ensure our responders safety.

Emergency Response and the challenge of Autism

With so many incidents of emergency responders being challenged when responding to calls involving autistic citizens, our association has teamed up with the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador to present awareness sessions to all emergency responders in the province. To date we have presented to over 2025 responders at no cost to Government. Through funding programs with other community minded groups, our association will continue this work in 2018.

TMR Radio Services

Our Firefighters over the past number of years have been requesting their association to lobby government for better communications throughout our highways where they have to respond too many dangerous and life threatening incidents. Do to the limited calling distance for many of the department's radio systems and lack of cell coverage most have little or no communication abilities to contact anyone for assistance while on a major incident.

The NL Association of Fire Services is asking our provincial government to look at providing all first responders Police, Fire & EMS the ability to use a radio system which NL Power and Transportation & Works are currently using. This radio system is referred to as **TMR**. This system is used by Fire, Police & EMS in Nova Scotia. This would allow all agencies to communicate on major incidents and with dispatch, 911 and other groups as required.

In Conclusion

Our Association has worked diligently to become the trusted advisor for government on fire response and fire prevention related issues. Through consultation, mutual respect and the willingness to look for solutions we have been a valuable resource for your government and we look forward to continuing that relationship well into the future.

Furthermore, the NL Association of Fire Services wishes to thank the Newfoundland and Labrador Government for their support of our operations and our Learn Not to Burn Program.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services stands ready to partner and consult with government to provide a top quality fire service to all Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans.

Our collaborative approach has afforded us much success on important topics. The Learn Not to Burn Program, Move Over Law updates, Presumptive Cancer Legislation, cost sharing arrangements for trucks and equipment, provincial training issues, Fentanyl safety and Fire Prevention programming are some of the higher profile issues we have successfully worked on together. We wish to expand on this proven and successfully approach.

Together we can not only find success but create it!

Respectfully submitted,



Duane Antle
President
NL Association of Fire Services