



## Media Release

### Firefighters Concerned about Future of Fire Service in Nova Scotia

(Sunday, May 31, 2009) - Representatives of fire and emergency services from across Nova Scotia met in Bible Hill today to discuss the future of their service.

A discussion forum was hosted by the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia (FSANS) for fire and emergency services to discuss concerns for the fire service that were outlined in the associations recent position paper on the future of the fire service. 177 members from 98 fire departments from across Nova Scotia met with their executive committee to discuss their concerns.

Firefighters in Nova Scotia face an increasingly difficult situation as they strive to fulfill public expectations for prompt service by well equipped and highly trained firefighters. These challenges are compounded by increasing financial pressures, increased public expectations and demands on firefighters work and personal time. Change is critically needed to maintain the fire service in Nova Scotia. Members of fire and emergency services identified four critical areas of concern:

#### A NOVA SCOTIA GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

- No such office or person exists today, which has resulted in widely varying standards for safety and public service. No authority exists now to ensure safe and effective fire and emergency services are being provided to Nova Scotians.
- An office of the Provincial Government with the authority and responsibility to direct and supervise the provision of firefighting services across the province is required.
- This office must be an advocate for fire departments and an advisor to government on fire and emergency service issues.

#### CHANGES TO THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT

- The current provisions of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) are insufficient to ensure adequate public protection and firefighter safety.
- The MGA does not make fire protection a required public service, but makes it "optional".
- The MGA does not include any provisions for how fire fighting services are to be provided, resulting in widely varying levels of funding, safety and public protection.

## MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SAFETY AND SERVICE DELIVERY

- Nova Scotia has no minimum performance standards for fire departments, fire officers or municipalities providing fire fighting services.
- There is no provincial minimum standard for firefighter training or their safety.
- Voluntary compliance guidelines, such as those published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) are unattainable for many Nova Scotia fire departments.
- Nova Scotia has no government office with the ability to enforce minimum standards for firefighting.

## FUNDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT FOR FIRE DEPARTMENTS

- Fire departments which voluntarily apply standards for training or safety face very large costs. Insufficient financial assistance is available to meet these needs.
- Reliance on fund raising is insufficient to meet the cost of operating fire departments.
- The time commitment required from firefighters for fund raising impairs their ability to maintain fire and rescue training, and further strains the demands on their work, family and personal time.
- Insufficient funding has a negative impact on the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.
- Aging facilities, fire apparatus and other equipment require significant capital investments.
- Training facilities for firefighters in Nova Scotia are underfunded, and the cost to access them is too high for many departments.

The members of fire and emergency services are committed to protecting Nova Scotians from fire and other emergencies. They are anxious to work with all levels of government towards a safer Nova Scotia. The FSANS position paper on these matters is available online at [www.fsans.ns.ca](http://www.fsans.ns.ca).

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