

## May 6-2026 Council Committee Meeting

### Fire Services/REMO Coordinator information points

- **Fire Coordinator**

- Municipality of the District of Clare Fire Service Review

- Recommendations #1(1-3year) EMG is recommending that the construction of the new fire station move forward.
- Recommendation #2 (0-1 year) EMG recommends that Clare implements a fire coordinator position
- Recommendation #3 (0-1 year) EMG recommends that the appointed fire service coordinator and the insurance provider conduct further investigation into this opportunity to ensure full liability coverage for the fire departments and their volunteers.

- **Recommendation # 3 “Insurance”**

- Approval of individual policy was granted on April 9, 2026, Sherry Spencer from Broker links has recommended 2 options to try to reduce costs, but I have concerns of inadequate coverage in our fire departments. Sherry and I will be meeting soon to have this conversation.

#### Option #1 - Amalgamation under the Municipality of the District of Clare

The fire departments must be under the direction and control of the Municipality. Generally, all assets are owned by the Municipality in this situation (i.e. vehicles are registered to the Municipality, buildings/contents/Fire Fighting Equipment etc,)

Considerations:

This option would require a resolution to be passed by the Municipality that they will assume direct control of the fire departments and their operations. I am not sure if the province would have any specific requirement with respect to how this should be structured, however we would suggest the advice of legal counsel with respect to this.

Under this option, all departments would be required to carry the same limits of liability and coverage as the Municipality ensuring uniform coverage – the Municipality would not need to worry that one of the departments was lacking in specific coverage.

This is also true in that deductibles would also be uniform. Considering the high property deductible the Municipality carries; consideration would need to be weighed with how much the Municipality is willing to self-insure.

Under this option, savings could be realized under different sections of coverage. This is hard to quantify at this point; however, the departments would now share the Municipality limits of liability and other coverage. The Municipality carries high limits of liability and broad coverage which each department may not currently carry now, therefore, this could be a pro/con and either cost savings or additional premium depending on the current limits carried by each department.

Combining policies under the Municipality would provide the potential to move the policy from Individually Rated Commercial Vehicles to a Fleet policy. The Municipality currently does not insure their vehicles under their Municipal Insurance Program. I cannot comment further on potentials of this unless the Municipality were to move their vehicles under the Municipal program.

All parties must be aware that any claims would also affect the entire policy. Increases in premiums and/or deductibles may apply.

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Option #2 – Fire Departments pool together as a region and have their own insurance policy separate from the Municipality

This is certainly an option that we can accommodate as we do have fire departments located in the same geographic area that share an insurance policy.

Considerations:

The departments would be required to provide an operating name – for example, the Volunteer Fire Departments of the Municipality of Clare – something of that nature and then we would list each department as a named insured under the policy.

All parties must be aware that each entity would have the ability to make changes to the policy as they would each be a named insured. They may want to appoint an administrator to oversee the insurance program.

Under this option, all departments would be required to carry the same limits of liability and coverage. These limits would all be SHARED by the departments. Considering the policy does not have a general aggregate this should not be an issue as far as the general liability is concerned, however, it is possible that limits for other areas of coverage could be exhausted by one or two of the departments, which would leave no coverage available in the event of multiple claims by multiple departments.

Combining the fire departments would provide the potential for the departments to move from Individually Rated Commercial Vehicles to a Fleet policy if there are enough power units which could result in cost savings.

Deductibles would also be uniform and can increase depending on any claims

All parties must be aware that any claims would also affect the entire policy. Increases in premiums and/or deductibles as a result would apply to the entire policy. If one department has multiple claims, the other departments would also incur the repercussions of the claims

- **Bulk Buying of PPE**

- 10% margin on PPE. May be able to help on boots, gloves, helmets.

- **Updating by-laws**

- CFFA By-laws have been updated and approved November 2025
  - Some fire departments have shared their by-laws to see if they can be updated to meet their current way of doing business and looking at the option to have 1 by-law for all departments.

- **State of our departments**

- With a voluntary survey completed in the province by the fire departments, it was discovered that some municipalities did not have the same type of coverage or members properly trained to provide safe fire protection.

- **Nova Scotia Firefighters School Value-for-Money Audit**

- the province released the findings of a value-for-money audit of the Nova Scotia Firefighters School in August and ended its relationship with the school because of concerns with safety, governance and other issues. They have since closed their doors.
- **Minister of Emergency Management, Natural Resources Kim Masland announcement**
  - Purchase of two mobile burn units, a third unit getting upgrades and four propane-fueled training props.
    - Mobile burning units are valued at \$2.16.
    - Props are valued at \$480,000
- **Level 1 Fire Training grant from DEM not including HAZMATE.**
  - (Part 1 of 2) Request sent and approved for a Hybrid Level 1 for the value of \$42,500. 21 members will be attending this course. Three per department was offered prior to these results.
    - Salmon River (2)
    - Hectanooga (0)
    - Meteghan (1)
    - Havelock (4)
    - Southville (4)
    - Little Brook (5)
    - St. Bernard (5)
  - 50 hours of Self-guided training plus 88 hours of hands-on weekend “6 full weekends”. (Total of 138 hrs.)
- **HAZMATE Awareness and Operations**
  - (Part 2 of 2) Vehicle Insurance Levy Funds application was submitted and approved for 21 members to complete the level one trained as per the provincial government. This will be an additional 32 hours of training for two full weekends.
  - Members will be level 1 trained as per the Standards for Interior Firefighter but not accredited trained.
- **Level 1 Instructor grant DEM**
  - Instructors course funding approved by DEM for the value of \$1,952.00. This will pay for 4 members to be instructors. 18 hours of virtual class and 19 days to complete self-study and testing.
- **Updating equipment list including expiring dates**
  - Providing support to log most assets that have a life expiration date or an inspections date to keep fire chief and or engineers up to date. This will help departments make critical decisions when it is time to replace equipment with available funding grants. Some inspections are not getting done and some of the PPE that is in circulation are expired.
- **Funeral protocol**
  - A CFFA committee is looking to implement Fire Department Funeral Guidelines that will include procedures for the following classifications
    - Line of Duty deaths during an emergency
    - Active member, off duty
    - Retired member

- There will be guidelines that members of the family can choose if they wish to include fire departments in the celebration of life.
  - **Other**
    - Fire coordinators from Digby, Argyle, Barrington, Shelburn and Clare meet monthly to support each other and to share information related to the fast-moving agenda from the provincial governments.
    - Fire departments response time and type of call is currently being tracked to identify our community Risks and to make sure capital funding is related to the risk identified by this report.
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- **REMO Coordinator**

- Region 5/6 Quarterly meetings
- Digby County Advisory Committee
- Tabletop exercise April 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> located at our Clare cultural hub.
  - We had some infrastructure damage. Many calls from the media and a few public concerns but no casualties. This exercise was a success, and our staff is now better prepared if the need is required.
  - Numerus Emergency Coordinator Center's in the province have opened due to storms crossing their areas. We have been lucky as a few weather storms in 2025-2026 had their sites to hit our community that could have activated our Emergency Coordination Center.
- I have recently completed a 5-day ICS O-305 "All-Hazards Incident Management
- Our Clare team will be all trained to ICS200 by the end of May with the exception to Stéphane ICS300
- Clare EMO has been meeting Monthly to identify risks and make improvements as follows.
  - Reviewing the provincial guidelines related to our Emergency Coordination Centre facility.
  - Generator backup with transfer switch
  - Adding 4 more TMR portable radios for a total of 6
  - Robust internet and phone system upgrade
  - Cell coverage upgrades
  - Starlink backup
  - 72hrs kit to support our team
  - Reviewing the NSEMO Comfort Centre Guidelines to identify risk related to those facilities in community.
  - Updating all forms and documents required to activate in an emergency.

## FACT SHEET

### Support for Fire Protection Services Act

#### Why the Support for Fire Protection Services Act Is Needed

Over the past year, we've taken a hard, honest look at the state of fire services across the province. These changes reflect the recommendations coming out of the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia's (FSANS) governance review last year.

#### **The problem**

- Fire services across Nova Scotia are inconsistent.
- There's a patchwork of funding, training standards, governance models, and service levels.
- Firefighters raised concerns about safety, training quality, and lack of oversight.

#### **What informed the changes**

The Province introduced the Support for Fire Protection Services Act on Monday, February 23 to strengthen fire services across Nova Scotia. The legislation is part of the Province's ongoing commitment to strengthening the fire services sector.

- A governance review by the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia (FSANS).
- Input from 700+ fire chiefs, deputies, municipal leaders, coordinators, and commissioners.
- A Value-For-Money Audit of the Nova Scotia Firefighter School (NSFS) identified serious safety and governance issues.

#### **What firefighters said they want**

- Better governance and oversight
- Safer, standardized training
- More consistent service delivery across the province

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#### **What the Act Does**

#### **The legislation**

- The *Support for Fire Protection Services Act* (Bill 186) was introduced February 23, 2026.

- It strengthens the fire service system without forcing major structural changes immediately.

### **Key goals**

- Improve consistency, safety, and coordination.
- Support municipalities and fire services.
- Modernize fire services over time, in an informed manner.

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## **Governance & Oversight Changes**

### **Office of the Fire Commissioner (New)**

- A new Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) will be created.
  - This is recommended by FSANS.
- Provides a single “home in government” for fire safety and fire services, oversight and leadership.

### **What the Fire Commissioner will do**

- Set provincewide standards (through regulations)
- Provide direction and oversight for fire services
- Lead training and certification reforms
- Coordinate with municipalities and fire services

### **How the Fire Commissioner will be chosen**

- Hired through a competitive public process
- Appointed under the *Civil Service Act*

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## **Responsibilities of the Province vs. Municipalities**

### **What's changing**

- Responsibility for the *Fire Safety Act* and *Rural Fire District Act* moves to the Minister of Emergency Management.
- The Province will set the provincial standards for:
  - Fire services
  - Training and certification
  - Personal protective equipment
  - Fire service planning and reporting
  - Transition support for municipal models

## **What's NOT changing**

This legislation does not change section 293 of the *Municipal Government Act*. Municipalities may maintain and provide fire and emergency services but will not be required to do so.

- Municipalities are not required to provide fire services (“may” does not become “shall”).
- Existing fire commissions, brigades, associations, and volunteer societies stay as they are.
- Wildland firefighters (DNR) are not affected.

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## **Fire Service Reviews & Risk Assessments**

### **Who must do them**

- All municipalities (even if they don't run fire services)
- Fire service providers, including commissions

### **What reviews include**

- Community risk assessments
- Evidence-based decisions on service levels
- Alignment of training, competencies, and equipment with local risk

### **Support from the Province**

- A free, standardized risk assessment tool
- Training on how to use the tool
- Local expertise leads the assessment

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## **Training, Certification & Standards**

### **Training model**

- Move toward regional training (not one central school).
- Hub-and-spoke model:
  - Advanced and command training centrally
  - Basic training delivered locally

### **Investments already made**

- Two mobile burn units

- Four propane fuelled training props
- Planned regional training facilities through partnerships

### **Firefighter certification**

- Level 1 certification is NOT mandatory
- Firefighters can choose roles:
  - Exterior (defensive)
  - Interior (offensive)
  - Support roles
- Training will be role appropriate and flexible
- Online and in-person (“hybrid”) delivery

### **NFPA standards**

- NFPA standards are not automatically adopted
  - Nova Scotia–specific standards will be developed over three years
  - Local capacity and realities will be factored in
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### **Support for Municipalities**

**If municipalities want to move to a municipally led fire service model, they can access:**

- Transition funding
- Shared procurement and insurance options
- Tools and templates (maps, service agreements, risk tools)
- A province-wide Fire Records Management System

### **Training supports**

- Fire Training Advisory Committee (FTAC)
  - Regional and interim training plans
  - Reduced barriers to recognized training
  - Work toward easier access to Class 3 licenses
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### **Funding & Fundraising**

Bill 186 does not change how fire services are funded in Nova Scotia.

- Funding models vary widely from community-to-community and across fire service organization types, services offered, and the involvement of municipalities.

- There is no one uniform/standard approach to funding fire services.
- Fire services are primarily paid for through a combination of municipal taxation, area rates and levies paid by users within a given service boundary, through grant funding, and fundraising such as the 50-50 Lottery and other charitable donations.

### **What's not changing**

- Funding models remain mixed and local
- Fundraising (e.g., 50/50s) continues

### **What will improve**

- In municipally led services, standardized equipment may reduce the need to fundraise for basics (like breathing apparatus).
- Province committed \$3M this year to strengthening fire services.
- Additional funding decisions will come as modernization progresses.

### **Transition funding**

- Available to municipalities and fire service providers that want to modernize and align with municipal leadership models.

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## **Timeline**

### **The Act received Royal Assent on April 9, 2026.**

- It is in force immediately.

### **DEM's Priorities Over the Next 3 Years:**

- Establish the Office of the Fire Commissioner
- Develop standards and regulations
- Build municipal and sector capacity
- Support gradual transition to modern service delivery

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## **What This Means Overall (In Plain Terms)**

- Clear leadership and better coordination
- Consistent standards that support firefighter safety
- Risk-based planning that reflects local needs
- Phased change, guided by engagement and feedback
- Focus on safety, consistency, and support
- Changes happen with firefighters and municipalities, not to them

## MFR Revised Response Levels

### *All Agencies*

Regardless of level **ALL AGENCIES** will be requested for the following:

- Motor Vehicle Collision
- Fire or explosion
- Haz-Mat or related rescue type situation
- Electrocutation
- Confined space and industrial extrication
- Request of responding Paramedics
- Any other situation that the Ground or MCC Watch Commander suspects might require the presence of a fire department

# 1

### ***Does Not Respond To Medical Calls***

- Agency will still be requested as per the "**All Agencies**" list above

# 2

### ***Immediate Life Threat***

- Will respond to all calls identified as Immediate Life Threat by Medical Dispatch Protocols (AMPDS - Echo)
- Examples - Cardiac Arrest, Respiratory Arrest, Choking with Complete Obstruction
- Includes 1 to 2 % of EHS calls in Nova Scotia

# 3

### ***Time Critical***

- Will respond to all condition in the above level as well as Time Critical conditions identified by Medical Dispatch Protocols (AMPDS - Echo & Delta)
- Examples - Shortness of Breath, Cardiac Chest Pain, Choking with Partial Obstruction
- Includes approximately 25% of EHS calls in Nova Scotia

# 4

### ***Urgent / Potentially Serious***

- Will respond to all condition in the above levels as well as Urgent and Potentially Serious conditions identified by Medical Dispatch Protocols (AMPDS - Echo, Delta & Charlie)
- Examples - Burns  $\geq$  18% Body Area, Active Seizure, Stroke, Symptomatic Overdose
- Includes approximately 49% of EHS calls in Nova Scotia

# 5

### ***Not Urgent***

- Will respond to all condition in the above levels as well as Not Urgent conditions identified by Medical Dispatch Protocols (AMPDS - Echo, Delta, Charlie, Bravo)
- Examples - Assault, Severe Eye Injury, CO Poisoning without Difficulty Breathing
- Includes approximately 72% of EHS calls in Nova Scotia