



Ontario Association Of Fire Chiefs

Communications Committee Terms of Reference

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1. Purpose/Mandate

The purpose of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) Communications Committee is to provide guidance and advice on matters relating to communications in the fire service as it relates internally, rather than public facing communications such as public safety campaigns. The Communications Committee will oversee a wide range of files including, but not limited to: Dispatch services, Next Generation 9-1-1, Public Safety Broadband Network, Public Safety Radio Network, EMS TIFF, and Fire Service Notifications such as Simultaneous Dispatch. The Communications Committee will make recommendations to the Board of Directors. Information will then flow through the association office to O AFC members relating to matters addressed at the committee meetings.

2. Scope of the O AFC Communications

The Communications Committee is expected to raise, discuss, and address issues of concern that affect O AFC members which relate to internal fire service communications and dispatching rather than public facing communications. The committee is expected to direct recommendations, to the Board of Directors for further action and/or resolution. This committee will also address issues submitted to them by the Board for deliberation and recommendation.

3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Vision

The O AFC, through the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) Committee and the Board of Directors, adopted the following vision statement as a guiding principle of work conducted through the association. Visions motivate and enable us to see how our efforts contributes to an overall purpose. The vision statement is integrated into all committee and working group terms of reference, so we can ensure that the work conducted by Communications Committee considers, and is reflective of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive fire service.

Vision: That every fire department in Ontario is equitable, inclusive, and reflects the diversity of the community they serve.

4. Role/Authority of the O AFC Communications Committee

Committee roles include the discussion of fire service management, organization, and legislation, as well as the delivery of fire protection services through a diversity and inclusive lens. Committee members are responsible for environmental scanning and maintaining situational awareness to ensure that the committee is well positioned to address emerging issues. The committee may engage in discussion, research, data collection and the review of existing or emerging procedures or guidelines. The committee may invite speakers or content experts, as approved by the Executive Director. The committee will report to the Board for further action or resolution of issues. Meeting minutes will be maintained by the appointed O AFC staff representative and will be posted on the O AFC website for member reference.



4.1 General Membership

The Committee is led by the appointed Board member, who also serves as Chair. Members of the committee are required to be Individual Members of the O AFC as outlined in the O AFC Constitution. The Board may also choose to appoint non-members to the committee. All committee members are appointed by the Board of Directors. The committee has twelve (12) positions, as well as a board alternate. One position is held for the chair, one for the co-chair.

The other ten (10) may be non-members, however all are appointed by the Board upon recommendation by the committee. Current Committee members are posted on the O AFC website.

4.2 Convenor/Chair/Board Alternate/Administration

The appointed Board member will chair the committee and be responsible for convening the scheduled meetings through a dedicated O AFC staff representative, as outlined in below. A co-chair will be appointed from the committee.

Each committee will also be assigned a Board alternate, who will participate on the committee as a member. The Board alternate position is to provide additional continuity *should the* appointed Board member (Chair) is no longer able to participate on a *long-term, or permanent basis*. The Board alternate is not included in the committee position count.

The staff representative is responsible for committee meeting coordination including scheduling meetings, forwarding meeting materials, collating agenda items, tracking/monitoring action items, internal communication(s)/tracking, and any other requirements as deemed by the chair.

4.3 Appointment and Term

Appointments on the O AFC Communications Committee are for one year, or until the next annual general meeting. Vacancies can be filled as required; however, after every annual general meeting of the O AFC, the association will post for expressions of interest for committee members. Expressions of interest for the O AFC Communications Committee should be submitted to the O AFC staff representative(s), as noted below. Members who wish to remain on this committee may submit an expression of interest to the appointed staff representative to remain on the committee. Expressions of interest will be reviewed by the Executive Director and chair and submitted to the Board for consideration and approval. Committee members will be selected based on applicable skills and knowledge regarding dispatch services, virtual and telecommunications technologies. Committee members will be appointed by the Board.

4.4 Meeting Agenda

The staff representative is responsible for the development of an agenda for the O AFC Communications Committee meetings based on consultation with the chair and co-chair. All members of the committee may submit agenda items for deliberation by the committee once a committee meeting has been scheduled. The staff representative will put out a call for agenda items. The agenda will be provided to the committee at least one-day prior to the committee meeting. Items not included on the agenda may be raised as new or other business during the meeting.



4.5 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of each O AFC Communications Committee meeting will be prepared by the appointed staff representative. Full copies of the draft minutes, including attachments, shall be provided to the chair for review, revision, approval and returned no later than three working days following each meeting. The meeting minutes will then be distributed to the committee.

The minutes will also be posted on the O AFC website for member review, upon approval of the chair. At the next meeting, committee members may suggest amendments to the previous minutes, which must be agreed to by consensus in order for them to be amended.

The minutes of each Communications Committee meeting will be maintained by the appointed staff representative as a complete record.

4.6 Action Items

Any action items identified during the meeting, must be noted as an action item, and be tasked to a specific person. It is the responsibility of the appointed staff representative to track and monitor all committee action items to ensure they are completed. The staff representative is responsible for apprising the chair on the status of action items before each meeting. The chair will discuss any outstanding action items during a committee meeting. Any action items that are flagged as an item to be brought forward to the Board of Directors, will be the responsibility of the chair.

The O AFC Communications Committee does not issue motions, nor has the authority to act on its own behalf. Any issue requiring attention, should be considered by the committee by consensus, and then “actioned” to be brought forward to the Board of Directors by the chair, for further action.

4.7 Decision Making Requirements & Meeting Quorum

A quorum of half (1/2) PLUS one (1) committee member is required for the meeting to be recognized as an authorized meeting for any recommendations or actions to be valid. If no quorum is reached, a record will be kept of those who were, and were not present. Decision making is based on consensus. Where consensus can't be reached, a vote will be conducted.

4.8 Frequency of Meetings

The committee will meet in-person, teleconference, or virtually, at minimum, on a quarterly basis, or at the call of the chair. Any unscheduled meeting may be called at the request of the chair as necessary to address time sensitive, urgent or legislative issues that can't be delayed until the next scheduled meeting.

4.9 Commitment

To ensure the O AFC Communications Committee operates efficiently, and that issues of importance are discussed and actioned, it is expected that committee members participate in the scheduled meetings and any relevant follow up. Three (3) consecutive absences from committee meetings will be reviewed by the chair. The chair will deem any appropriate action, in consultation with the Board of Directors.



4.10 Communications

Committee members are expected to communicate amongst each other as needed. The appointed staff representative must be copied on all committee communications and will ensure relevant communications are forward to the communications strategist. Any communications outside the committee (i.e., to other committees or the membership at large) must adhere to the O AFC Communications Protocol and be vetted through the O AFC office and sent by the O AFC office.

It is up to the Chair, Board Alternate, and/or members of an O AFC committee to determine if an issue is cross-jurisdictional with another O AFC committee. If it is determined, by committee member consensus, that the issue should be shared and/or communicated with another committee, an actionable item must be created and tracked through the committee's meeting minutes, by the staff representative. As the staff representative is responsible to follow up on actionable items, it will be their responsibility to facilitate the sharing of information between each Chair of the applicable committees. A course of action will be determined by each Chair and shared with each committee via the staff representative.

5. Confidentiality

Respect for confidentiality is the cornerstone of trust and confidence as well as a legislated obligation. Employees, Board members, Committee members and Volunteers must at all times respect the confidentiality of any member, sponsor, staff, volunteer, or member names and/or circumstances, and all matters relating to those organization(s) and/or individual(s). Respect and maintain the confidentiality of information gained as an employee, board member, committee member and volunteer including, but not limited to, all computer software and files, meeting minutes, Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs business documents and printouts, and all membership, employee, candidate and vendor records.

Confidentiality means you may not relate such matters to anyone including immediate family members. The duty of confidentiality continues indefinitely after a Board member, Committee member, Employee or Volunteer has left the association.

Employees, Board members, Committee members and Volunteers shall agree to the Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Policy and Confidentiality Policy. Board members will also sign and comply with the O AFC Oath of Office.

6. Code of Conduct

The following Code of Conduct ("the Code") is designed to allow the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs to preserve its integrity and credibility within the association membership, affiliated organizations and the public. This Code applies to our Board of Directors, Committee Members, Volunteers and all Employees (permanent full-time, hourly, fixed term contract, permanent part-time).

1. Always act with fairness, honesty, integrity and openness; respect the opinions of others and treat all with equality and dignity without regard to gender, race, colour, creed, and ancestry, place of origin, political beliefs, religion, marital status, disability, age, or sexual orientation.
2. Promote and support the objectives, the mission and mandates of the association in all dealings with members, vendors and the public on behalf of the Association. Serves the overall best interests of the organization rather than any particular constituency.
3. Provide a positive experience for those receiving service within and outside the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.



4. Respects principles of fair play and due process. Respects and gives fair consideration to diverse and opposing viewpoints.
5. Demonstrates due diligence and dedication in preparation for an attendance at meetings, special events and in all other activities on behalf of the organization.
6. Demonstrates good faith, prudent judgment, honesty, transparency and openness in their activities on behalf of the organization.
7. Avoids real or perceived conflicts of interest.
8. Act with honesty and integrity and in accordance with any professional standards and/or governing laws and legislation that have application to the responsibilities you perform for or on behalf of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs policies apply to all Board Members, Committee Members, Volunteers and Employees. Policies are reviewed every year, or sooner, if an issue arises with its interpretation and use.
9. Adhere to the policies and procedures of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and support decisions and directions of the Board of Directors and its delegated authority.
10. Take responsibility for your actions and decisions. Follow reporting lines to facilitate the effective resolution of problems. Ensure that you do not exceed the authority of your position. Publicly demonstrate acceptance, respect and support of decisions legitimately taken in transaction of the organization's business.
11. Conforms to any By-laws and policies, in particular this Code of Conduct, the Oath of Office (board) and Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest policies.

6.1 Personal or Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature that one would find to be unwanted or unwelcome by any individual, or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that individual as placing a condition of sexual nature on an employment or career development.

Personal harassment means any conduct whether verbal or physical that is discriminating in nature, based upon another person's race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political beliefs, religion, marital status, physical or mental disability, sex, age or sexual orientation. It is discriminatory behaviour, directed at an individual that is unwanted or unwelcome and causes substantial distress in that person and serves no legitimate work-related purpose.

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs has a zero tolerance policy with respect to personal/sexual harassment.

Personal/sexual harassment in any form is strictly prohibited and may be grounds for termination as a board member or committee member/volunteer, or, in the case of an employee, immediate dismissal for just cause without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

7. Conflicts of Interest

In general, a conflict of interest exists for Board members, Employees, Committee members and Volunteers who use their position at the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs to benefit themselves, friends, family or relatives.

Upon appointment of employment or appointment to the Board of Directors or an Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Committee, Employees/Board Members/Committee Members/Volunteers shall arrange their private affairs in a manner that will prevent any conflict of interest from arising.

An Employee, Board member, Committee member or Volunteer's actions should not compromise or undermine our members or public's trust in the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.



Employees, Board members, Committee members and Volunteers should not place themselves in a position where they are, or appear to be, under personal obligation to any person who might benefit or seek to gain special consideration or favour resulting from the relationship.

Employees, Board members, Committee members and Volunteers shall avoid any situation in which there is, or may appear to be, a potential conflict which could appear to interfere with their judgment in making decisions in the best interest of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Employees, Board members, Committee members and Volunteers shall exercise care in the management of their private affairs so as not to benefit, or be perceived to benefit from:

- A. The use of information acquired solely by reason of their employment; or
- B. Any Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs transactions over which they can influence decisions (e.g. investment, borrowing, purchases, sales, contracts, grants, and appointments).

There are a variety of situations that could give rise to a conflict of interest. Employees, Board members, Committee members and Volunteers should make it known to the association, or delegated authority, if they believe they may be in conflict of interest. These include but are not limited to: accepting gifts, entertainment, favours or “kickbacks” from suppliers or other organizations, personal gain from relationships established through the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, close or family relationships with outside suppliers or other organizations, passing confidential information to competitors or other interested parties, or using confidential information inappropriately.

8. Reporting

Members of the committee, including the co-chair, are to provide reports and/or recommendations from the Communications Committee, through the action item process, to be brought forward to the Board of Directors, through the chair. The committee is not permitted to take independent action on behalf of the committee, the O AFC or the Board of Directors, without approval by the Board of Directors.

9. Review of Terms of Reference

The O AFC Communications Committee Terms of Reference will be reviewed during the first committee meeting following the installation of the new Board of Directors.

Last approved by the Board:

O AFC staff representative:

Mark Tishman, Program & Policy Analyst

Updated: December 2021