



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

Leading innovation and excellence in public and life safety

Bill 148 Key Messages – Volunteer Fire Service

- The OAFCh respects and values the contributions of all firefighters in Ontario's fire service – career and volunteer.
- Volunteer/part-time firefighters are integral to ensuring Ontarians' continued safety, with over 19,000 volunteer/part-time firefighters working alongside 11,000 full-time counterparts to protect communities across the province.
- The volunteer fire service is a more than \$2 billion resource to the province.
- The volunteer fire service is a safe, sustainable model, which works in concert with full-time departments, to ensure the current level of emergency services provided to Ontarians is maintained.
- The volunteer fire service enables compassionate, dedicated people to provide their communities a much-needed resource that may otherwise be unavailable, especially in rural settings.
- At no time did Ontario's volunteer fire service request changes to their compensation or scheduling models, such as those outlined in the provisions included in Bill 148. This was simply an unintended financial consequence to the municipal sector as a result of the Bill's initial wording, which has since been mitigated during the Bill's second reading.
- It is misleading to average the wage of volunteer/part-time firefighters, as noted in AMO's Bill 148 position paper, because volunteer/part-time firefighter wages vary across jurisdictions and are based entirely on a municipality's ability to pay.
- When interpreting Bill 148, it is important to understand the distinction between on-call and *per* call pay for volunteer/part-time firefighters. Volunteer/part-time firefighters are paid *per* call, having the choice to respond to or decline a request for service. This was the key distinction OAFCh was attempting to bring awareness to in its opposition to the Bill's on-call pay provisions.
- The scope and responsibilities of volunteer/part-time versus career firefighters warrant different compensation rates and models for each group. This is well understood within the fire service.
- Volunteer/part-time firefighters consistently say that the role is rewarding in many other ways than the minor financial compensation they may receive from the municipality, which is why they choose to give freely of their time to serve their communities in this capacity.
- OAFCh petitioned against Bill 148, as it was written in its original form, because of the anticipated financial consequences on the municipal sector that could have forced municipalities to re-evaluate its funding model, where the cost for emergency services would exceed budgets, requiring this level of service to be decreased or eliminated. This would mean downsizing the volunteer fire service by thousands of positions – positions occupied by committed volunteers who were content with their current compensation model, but instead fell victim to ill-informed legislative changes affecting a municipality's ability to pay their wages.