

## Meeting Minutes

# Ontario Fire Service Advisory Committee (Section 21 Committee)

**Thursday, November 28, 2024 – 12:00 pm – 4:30 pm**

**Friday, November 29, 2024 – 8:00 am - 12:00 pm**

*Meeting Held In-Person in Ajax at the Ajax Fire Department Headquarters*

### **Attendance:**

Rob Grimwood	OAFC – Committee Co-Chair
Dan Worrall	OPFFA – Committee Co-Chair
Adam Neal	OPFFA
Harry Baranik	OAFC
Aaron Burrridge	OAFC
Jeff Kirk	OAFC (Absent day 2)
Mark Pankhurst	AMO
Doug Kellam	Volunteer Firefighter
Andrew King	Volunteer Firefighter
Stephanie Maragna	MNR – Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services (AFFES)
Erica Arsenault	MLITSD
David Winter	MLITSD
Ricardo Romero	PSHSA (Consultant/Facilitator)
Kayla Thomson	PSHSA (Minutes)

### **Regrets:**

John Plater	OPFFA
Tim Sparks	OPFFA
Jeff Kirk	OAFC (Absent day 2)
Cathy Hoffman	AMO
John Mcbeth	Office of the Fire Marshal (observer)
Ronald Landry	MLITSD
Patricia Clausen	PSHSA (Alternate facilitator)

### **Guests:**

Jackie Sam	PSHSA (Day 2)
Somiya Tabassum	PSHSA (Day 2)
Teresa D'Elia	PSHSA (Virtual day 2)
Monica Bienefeld	MLITSD (Virtual day 1)
Nancy Bradshaw	MLITSD (Virtual day 1)

**Thursday, November 28, 12:00 pm: Meeting Convened**

### **Greetings – D. Worrall/R. Grimwood**

- D. Worrall and R. Grimwood greeted the committee.

### **Review of Minutes from September Meeting – D. Worrall/R. Grimwood**

- No changes.

**ACTION:** K. Thomson to remove draft watermark and send to OAFK for posting.

## **Guidance Notes**

Update on the guidance notes that are currently with the MLITSD – E. Arsenault

### *GN 3-3 Heat and Cold Stress*

- In the approval process.

### *GN 5-3 Workplace Violence*

- Currently working through signatures for final approval.

### *GN 6-18 Unprotected Lightweight Building Construction*

- With the legal team.

### *GN 6-26 Structural Firefighting Tactics (Formerly Fire Streams and Ventilation)*

- With the legal team.

### *GN 6-49 Encampments*

- In the approval process.

## Guidance Note Comments – D. Winter

### *GN 6-50 Lithium-Ion Batteries*

- Two comment forms were received:
  - One comment was regarding bullet 5 under procedures. They suggested the separation of bullets. The committee approved and the change was made.
  - The second comment was regarding the addition of vehicles. Since there is a separate guidance note about vehicles, the committee didn't approve the addition. Under procedure, a bullet was suggested to thoroughly document (Photo/video) the scene by appropriate means which was approved by the committee. The grammar and word change suggestions by the commentor were also approved.

### *GN 6-54 Rail Emergencies*

- No comments.

### *GN 6-55 Supplementary Support Vehicles*

- One comment received.
  - Committee approved of the comment regarding wearing PPE and put it in after the other PPE section. "Ensure PPE does not interfere with operating controls"

**ACTION:** E. Arsenault and D. Winter to send the above guidance notes through the ministry process. The committee asked if the lithium-ion batteries guidance note could take priority and be expedited due to the need for having this in circulation as soon as possible. E. Arsenault and D. Winter said they would see what they can do.

## Review and Finalize Lost Guidance Notes – R. Grimwood

The committee reviewed the lost guidance notes before the meeting with comments incorporated. The committee went over the guidance notes one final time together to approve them finally going through the ministry process.

### *GN 6-48 Marine Vessels*

- The committee had a few changes to word usage and grammar.

#### *GN 6-51 Air Monitoring*

- The committee had a few changes to word usage and grammar.
- [Reg. 833](#) was added to the applicable regulations and acts section.

#### *GN 6-52 Firefighter Safety Around Rail Lines*

- The bullets under considerations were reorganized so that they are in a sequential order.

#### *GN 7-08 Live Fire Training*

- The committee had a few changes to word usage and grammar.
- [Guidance note 3-3](#) was added to the related section.
- [NFPA 1521](#) was added to the references section.

**ACTION:** R. Grimwood to send the updated guidance notes to E. Arsenault and D. Winter to send through ministry process.

#### Discuss Guidance Notes on Energy Storage Systems and Hybrid-Electric Vehicles – R. Grimwood

- The committee discussed proposed guidance notes around the topics of electric vehicles and energy storage systems and formed two working groups to work on the new/revised guidance notes:
  - Electric vehicles working group: A. King, M. Pankhurst and D. Kellam.
  - Fixed energy storage systems: A. Burrige, J. Kirk and D. Kellam.

**ACTION:** The working groups to update the committee at the February meeting.

#### Cyclical Review: Finalize Plans to Re-Start the Cyclical Review Process – R. Grimwood

- February 2025 is scheduled to be the start of a cyclical review process.
- The committee will review at least seven guidance notes prior to the meeting and prepare their thoughts on the current state of those guidance notes.
- These reviews are essential to keep guidance notes up to date, looking at what has changed over the course of the past three years since the guidance notes were previously reviewed.

#### **Terms of Reference Review – R. Grimwood**

- The committee went over the current terms of reference and how it is in need of a review with changes over the years.
- R. Grimwood flagged that the terms of reference is not what has been happening on the admin side. K. Thomson shared an updated admin process that was talked about and approved between the MLITSD and PSHSA. This document has been the process that both parties had been following over the past three years.
- Specific section changes:
  - Objective: Add reference to the Chief Prevention Officer in the recommendations section.
  - Scope: Add in an I to MLITSD to all MLITSD references within the document.
  - Admin: The committee approved of the changes proposed by the MLITSD and PSHSA's document.
  - Resources: Add in the MLITSD Prevention Branch, Solicitor General - OFM, MNR - Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services, Strategic Policy Division.

**ACTION:** E. Arseneault and D. Winter to confirm ministry roles and ensure the ministry is properly referenced.

- Guidance note development process: The committee approved of the changes proposed by the MLITSD and PSHSA's document.
- NEW SECTION "Attendance": New section added to hold committee members accountable for attendance. When a committee member misses multiple meetings per year, it will be put to the co-chairs to decide next steps and if the seat is vacant.

**ACTION:** R. Grimwood to send D. Winter the updated document to have it reviewed by the ministry.

#### **Policy Update – MLITSD**

- There is no update for this meeting but there will be a new representative in attendance during the next meeting.

#### **Cancer Communications Working Group –R. Grimwood /D. Worrall/C. Hoffman/M. Pankhurst/K. Thomson**

- Now that we have a WSIB update, this group can continue on with tasks.

**ACTION:** Working group to meet prior to next meeting.

#### **OAFC Update – R. Grimwood**

- The OAFC event last week was a success.
  - The Minister and Chief Prevention Officer attended the committee presentation which was greatly appreciated.
  - Minister Piccini was made an honorary fire chief.
- R. Grimwood gave an overview of political advocacy movement of some of the items including abandoned gas wells, slow down move over, latency periods, etc.
- There was some movement announced about revising the *Forest Fire Protection Act*.
- In December they are meeting with the Premier to talk about 2025 priorities.

#### **OPFFA Update – D. Worrall**

- D. Worrall gave an overview of political advocacy movement of some of the items including [working for workers 6](#), latency periods and slow down move over.
- The OPFFA is having a political action week next week with the hopes of moving the agenda on O Reg 714 and medical surveillance.
- The seminar was great.
  - D. Worrall shared that R. Grimwood was rated number one on the survey for guest speakers and there were over 400 attendees.
  - D. Worrall gave an overview of other activities during the day and the overall success of the day including how lithium-ion batteries is a large topic of conversation amongst the attendees.
  - D. Worrall and R. Grimwood went over committee activities and how well the committee is doing and the relationship between labour and management.

#### **PSHSA Update – R. Romero**

##### Mental Health Program Discussion

- R. Romero asked the committee about the amount of mental health resources available to firefighters.

- The committee had a discussion about how saturated the current market is. There are an overwhelming number of options for mental health supports, almost too many.

#### R2 for Leaders – Classroom Training

- Summary: R2 for Leaders training helps public safety organizations build resilience. Available for free until the end of FY25-26.
- Free Training: Available to public safety organizations until FY25-26.
- Contact: Reach out to schedule a session. [Link to Register](#)

#### R2 The Fundamentals – eLearning

- Summary: This self-paced eLearning course focuses on building resilient public safety organizations. It's free for a limited time and can be accessed online.
- Free eLearning: Available for Police, Fire, and EMS until FY25-26. Self-register via the following links:
  - [Police – R2 The Fundamentals](#)
  - [Fire – R2 The Fundamentals](#)
  - [EMS – R2 The Fundamentals](#)
- Please share widely with your team.

#### Managing Mental Health Stay at Work & Return to Work for First Responders – Classroom Training

- Summary: This course focuses on strategies to manage mental health while staying at work or returning to work. It's available for free until the end of FY25-26.
- Free Training: Available for public safety organizations.
- Contact: Reach out to schedule a session. [Link to Register](#)

#### Updates

- Recently, R. Romero delivered Health and Safety for Leaders training in Leamington. The group was highly engaged and expressed excitement about Mental Health training opportunities.
- If you know of organizations interested in any of these training sessions, please let R. Romero know to coordinate scheduling.

#### Consulting

##### *Radius*

- Radius is a newly launched web-based application addressing gaps in psychosocial risk assessments. It focuses on 18 job-specific factors, enabling organizations to collaboratively identify solutions to enhance worker wellbeing.
- How It Works:
  1. Access Radius by creating an online workplace account.
  2. Facilitators complete a brief eLearning module.
  3. Select a job to assess for psychological risk.
  4. Host worker and leader review sessions to evaluate risks and identify solutions.
- Updates: Radius has officially launched and is already generating significant interest from various organizations.

##### *Occupational Stress Injury Resiliency (OSIR) Tool*

- The OSIR Tool assesses occupational stress injury resilience in organizations. Free access is available, and the validation study is ongoing.
  - Free Access: Available to public safety organizations until FY25-26.

- Validation Study: Conducted in collaboration with the Institute for Work & Health.
- Recruitment: Actively seeking organizations to participate. Contact [OSIR@pshsa.ca](mailto:OSIR@pshsa.ca) for next steps.

### **MLITSD Prevention – 1:15 pm on the 28<sup>th</sup>**

- M. Bienefeld and N. Bradshaw joined us virtually and will be meeting with all S21 committees.
- They announced that Dr. Moody will be joining us in a future meeting.
- The prevention division is looking to have someone regularly attend meetings.
- M. Bienefeld went over different divisions under the ministry's prevention team.
- Yesterday, Minister Piccini introduced the 6<sup>th</sup> working for worker's bill. M. Bienefeld went over the bill, including 22.3 proposal which connects the Chief Prevention Officer to the committees. Section 21 has no proposed changes; the amendment would not change anything other than providing a more direct line between the Chief Prevention Officer and the committees to support the work of the committees.
- Some process and admin changes may come but it's up to the committee.
- The Chief Prevention Officer will be CC'd on letters and guidance notes that are sent to the minister from the committees.
  - This change will result in no change in timelines for the guidance note review process.
- Other current activities:
  - The prevention division funds 6 occupational cancer research centres. There is an expansion of research possibilities.
  - The Chief Prevention Officer has been directed to make an electric vehicle action plan. The groundwork has already been started with a new group. The OFM has met with the new group to talk about the issue.
  - Currently in development with the prevention division is an occupational cancer exposure registry. They are creating a system to start filling gaps in knowledge on when and where exposures happen in Ontario. Public access is expected in 2026.
  - The [Workplace Safety Plan Builder](#) that launched during the pandemic is an online portal and resource to help small-medium sized make custom plans to protect them from respiratory illnesses. The builder is being updated to include more data and information and is expected to be complete in winter 2024/2025.
  - Working at heights is mandatory under the occupational health and safety act for those that use specific equipment as well as Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) certification training. The prevention division is working on a review of the JHSC certification to make sure everything is still relevant and up to date. Working at heights just finished and was updated.
  - The workplace naloxone program ran over the course of 18 months. 5,000 kits were distributed and 5,500 people were trained. Learners reported an increase in knowledge of how to use the kit and an increase in knowledge of opioids. This is great news.
    - Real world impact: In March 2024, a grocery store in the GTA had two opioid incidents. Both lives were saved due to workers being trained.
- N. Bradshaw met with us previously and went to all S21 committees to engage. She provided an update on the engagement:
  - They are finalizing the information that was received to help in creating the next five-year strategy. The current strategy ends in March 2025.
  - They are looking forward to having the prevention team join us regularly to provide updates and learn more from the S21 committees through discussions.
  - N. Bradshaw thanked the committee for having her last meeting.

- M. Pankhurst asked if there will be a five-year report regarding what worked, what didn't, unfinished business, etc. M. Bienefeld says she believes that is the intent but is not sure to what extent.

### **Friday, November 29 8:30 am: Meeting Convened**

#### **MNR – Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services (AFFES) – S. Maragna**

- S. Maragna gave an overview of what the MNR is up to including presumptive coverage and PTSD.
- They are working on exposure programs for smoke and dermal. It has been a slower process while they find the right subject matter experts.
- During the last meeting, the committee told S. Maragna about fire wipes and asked if there was an update on their usage. S. Maragna said that the idea was brought forward, and the team is looking into it.
- [Bill 228](#) has been tabled and gone through second reading.
- Changes to the [forest fires prevention act](#) for modernization:
  - The act hasn't had a big change since 1999. Amendments include Name change, wild land fire management plans, minister involvement, restricted fire zones, reducing requirement for permits.
- R. Grimwood asked if there has been discussion on redrawing the boundaries. S. Maragna said there has been discussions, nothing immediate down the line:
  - Above the line: Agreements, resources, etc. Below the line: Not applicable. Places below Bracebridge and Gravenhurst are having issues with fires because they are below the line.
  - There is also the issue of firefighters not being able to go onto crown land and tell people to put out fires.
  - The committee discussed fire bans and the logistics including a fire ban on one side of a street and not the other.
- Heat illness is a priority in 2025. A heat illness prevention plan is very weather dependent for working on it due to field testing.
- Psychological safety is along the same lines as conversations with PSHSA earlier. So many options to choose from. Currently, they're focusing on resilient minds and existing programs within the government. This is a hot topic on the table.
- S. Maragna spoke about the fire that went through Jasper and the scale of it.
- Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre has developed a community of practice for mental health and safety standards.
- Safety equipment is different province by province which is a constant toil of what the safety standard is. They're looking at standardization.
- The committee talked about how the NFPA isn't law, it's guidance. S. Maragna shared how the wildland fire fighting NFPA standard isn't exactly what they need.

#### **PFAS discussion – All**

- BC put together a lobby point and public petition that has reached the minimum requirements for signatures, so the government has to see it now.

#### **New business**

##### **PSHSA's PTSD Prevention Plans Presentation – J. Sam, S. Tabassum and T. D'Elia**

- The team gave an overview of the project background and objectives, provided the committee with a literature review finding, findings from the jurisdictional scan and sub-sector observations.



- Summary project background and objectives:
  - Employers covered by presumptive legislation were to [create and submit PTSD Prevention Plans to the MLITSD](#) in 2017. This project is to help support first responder workplaces in Ontario with PTSD prevention planning and programming through the identification of current evidence and best practices, enhancement of existing resources and to work with organizations to update and implement plans. Phase one consists of a current state analysis literature review, jurisdictional scan, survey, interviews and focus groups.
- Summary literature review:
  - The literature review showed that 44.5% of Canadian public safety personnel showed clinical symptoms of at least one mental health disorder
  - Mean rates of PTSD were at 21% across sectors: 19% municipal police, 25% RCMP, 22% paramedics and 17% firefighters.
  - The team also went through risk factors and risk groups with the committee. For example, the review found that workplace factors that increase vulnerability include low levels of support for workers, lack of control over workload and interpersonal workplace conflicts.
  - The team also discussed organizational interventions and success in return to work programs. They also discussed limitations in current research including the need for improvements in the quality and rigor of intervention studies.
- Summary jurisdictional scan:
  - There were 40+ mental health support and treatment programs and 61 PTSD prevention plans reviewed across Ontario and Canada. The target audience included first responders, Canadian armed forces, veterans and corrections personnel with the following interventions:
    - Primary Interventions (18 programs)
    - Secondary Interventions (12 programs)
    - Tertiary Interventions (10 programs)
  - The delivery methods involved 20 in-person services, 15 online components and five hybrid models. Accessibility wise, they looked at usability of tools for those with disabilities, services offered in English and French and privacy for online consultations. Currently, challenges exist in variability in accessibility features, limitations of evaluations on outcome metrics and an underfunding and staffing issue.
  - They found that in urban areas there is an emphasis on leadership commitment and mental health education, there is often more training, programs and resources readily available. Whereas suburban areas rely more heavily on peer support and small, close-knit teams and rural areas have an emphasis on internal supports and local partnerships.
- Sub-sector observations:
  - The team shared details across different sectors, however, researchers found that for the fire services, volunteer and rural firefighters struggle with limited resources, governance structures and are more at risk of cumulative trauma. They often take on multiple roles and have more personal connections with rural communities.

*Discussion With the Committee:*



- The committee discussed how there is no structured return to work programs for many members. For the most part, people retire or do not return to work. They don't hear from WSIB, they don't hear from their employees, etc.
- The committee also discussed the possibility of there being higher susceptibility for those who also work in healthcare, as paramedics, volunteer firefighters, etc. on the side.
- In terms of responses received from surveys, it's not surprising that a lot of feedback is positive. People don't want to risk their jobs, licenses, etc. so they don't answer correctly. They say "All is fine" when all is not fine, as a shield.
- The committee discussed the benefits of fitness when it comes to relieving stress and shared an example of a department buying a basketball hoop for members and seeing an increase in mental health due to the investment.
- Right now, when making claims, you're often faced with complexities and obstacles, especially when you are a small department. There might not even be an HR official for the fire department. Unfortunately, when it comes to situations like this, there isn't much when it comes to support.
- The puzzle is a lot bigger than the research says.
- A committee member also asked for clarification on the term "Suburban" J. Sam shared that some of the GTA would be considered suburban, Mississauga is urban.
- Question from the team at PSHSA: In terms of PTSD prevention planning, have they been operationalized, what is your experience in the implementation?
  - Varies department by department. Depends on resources available. Some departments don't have anything while others do.
  - There weren't any repercussions for the departments that didn't do it because it can't be enforced. However, a letter has been sent to the Minister to try and make it enforceable.
  - The committee discussed the disconnect and getting people to understand when they do need help which loops back into the previous discussion of surveyors essentially saying they are fine. They also discussed inpatient facilities and psychologists hired to work at a specific workplace is beneficial.
  - When talking about incentive for doing things, it's important that investing in your people should be a priority.
  - A PTSD prevention plan template would be beneficial.
- Question from the team at PSHSA: We've talked about different programs. Is there anything that's working well that you've seen?
  - Resilient minds.
  - 
  - Generationally, it's all very different. Age groups handle things differently, the next generation is more in tune with their feelings and not afraid of it which is great but some of older generations still see the stereotype.
  - The committee talked about reverse stigma with firefighters taking time off when they don't need it and using the system that way. It makes firefighters who do need time off not want to take the time off they desperately need. No one wants to accuse someone of not needing it, so there are whispers and rumors, but nothing is done about it.

#### Cancer Prevention Checklist – R. Grimwood

- A review of the checklist is to take place in 2025. It's a fair bit of work to be done. The committee agreed to meeting for two full days in February and coming prepared with their thoughts so that we can take the time we need to get through it.

**ACTION:** Co-chairs to confirm with R. Landry that committee members can stay the two nights needed for a two day meeting.

**ACTION:** K. Thomson to update meeting invite to reflect two full days, new hotel and the meeting location.

#### Inviting Stakeholders and Dignitaries to Future Meetings – R. Grimwood

- The committee would like S. Maragna to come back with an MNR rep from the labour side. Someone with a long career so they can talk history, someone who is a unionized labour rep and certified worker rep.

**ACTION:** S. Maragna to come back with potential names.

#### Section 21 Committee Communication Avenues

- The committee is interested in moving forward with having a social media presence and has asked K. Thomson from PSHSA to run the account since her role at PSHSA is marketing specialist.

**ACTION:** K. Thomson has agreed and will talk to her team at PSHSA to ensure she is approved to take on the extra work and will provide an update at the next meeting.

#### Finalize Locations for First Two 2025 meetings – D. Worrall

- February: Chatham-Kent.
- June joint meeting: Markham (Pending).

#### 2025 Joint Meeting Discussion – E. Arsenault and D. Winter

- June 5 is scheduled for the joint meeting.
- The Ministry is looking to have WSIB attend.
- Markham may be the location, but it is taking a bit of time for approvals. It's not 100% confirmed yet.
- The committee agreed that if we have to pay for our own lunches, they will still attend.
- R. Grimwood might be able to get the training room in Mississauga for 75 people if all else fails.

**ACTION:** E. Arsenault to continue trying for Markham and CC R. Grimwood and D. Worrall while trying to work it out.

#### 2025 Committee Priorities Discussion – D. Worrall

- The committee discussed their top priorities for 2025 (In no particular order):
  - Cyclical review
  - Cancer prevention awareness
  - Revising cancer prevention checklist
  - PTSD
  - O Reg 714
  - Noise induced hearing loss
  - Heat stress
  - Medical surveillance

#### WSIB Report Review

- The committee received updated data that was distributed to the members.

- The WSIB will attend the next meeting to discuss any details of the report if we are interested. The committee expressed interest in having them twice a year (June and December).
- The committee also asked if the WSIB could provide a map of cases.

**ACTION:** E. Arsenault to send the slides to the committee for their reference.

**ACTION:** E. Arsenault to send an invite to WSIB to discuss PTSD claims and the low numbers as well as more details in line with last year's presentation.

Cassen Report (Laboratory Evaluation of Firefighter Protective Clothing) – R. Grimwood

- R. Landry has said it would be inappropriate for a hygienist to speak to it, Cassen should come and speak about it, but they speak more scientifically. We are in need of someone to give an overview in a way that would be easier to understand. The discussion was tabled for now.

**2025 meeting dates:**

- February 27 and 28
- June 5 and 6 – Multi committee (Tri service) meeting
- September 15 and 16
- December 4 and 5