



**Ontario  
Association  
of  
Fire Chiefs**

**2008-2009**

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December 31, 2008

The Honourable Dwight Duncan  
Minister of Finance and Chair of Management Board of Cabinet  
7 Queen's Park Crescent, 7<sup>th</sup> floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1Y7

Dear Minister Duncan:

Re: Request for Inclusion of Fire Departments in Infrastructure Funding

We are writing to you to request that municipal Fire Department apparatus, equipment and structures be included as part of any provincial or federal government infrastructure program. Much of the fire apparatus and equipment is old, below standard and needs to be replaced. In addition during this period of economic uncertainty expenditures for the fire service can quickly inject a boost into the Ontario, Canadian and North American economies.

The role of all 478 Ontario fire departments and our 30,000 firefighters is to protect Ontarians and their property. Across Ontario there are an average of 28,569 fires, 101 deaths, 862 injuries and \$414.3 million dollars of property loss every year. This makes fire deadlier than all natural disasters combined. These statistics however only represent 15% of the total calls for help received by the fire and emergency services departments. Fire departments are the first responders to almost every public emergency or disaster. They "answer the call" to motor vehicle collisions, life-threatening medical calls, floods, building collapses, uncontrolled releases of contaminants into the environment (chemical spills), ice and water rescue, trench rescue, high angle rescue, ice storms, tornados, and various other emergencies.

The safety of the Ontario public and Ontario firefighters is being jeopardized by antiquated equipment. Our research indicates that 42% of all fire vehicles are over 15 years old (1 in 6 are over 20 years old); These trucks are specialized, heavy-duty, custom-built units. The average cost of a fire truck ranges from \$225,000 for a tanker to over \$1,000,000 for an aerial. The cost of the equipment that goes on the truck is in addition to these amounts.

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Furthermore our research found that 17% of all firefighter bunker suits are over 10 years old; and 22% of all self-contained breathing apparatus units are over 10 years old. This aging equipment does not meet current industry standards, and we are concerned that the equipment could fail to protect our public and firefighters when it is needed most.

In addition many fire departments do not have the necessary tools to get the job done: only 12% of the fire departments have radios that are capable of communicating with police and ambulance personnel during emergencies; 23% of fire stations do not have heavy hydraulics for auto extrication; and 44% of fire stations do not have thermal cameras for locating and rescuing people inside burning structures.

This fire department infrastructure deficit in Ontario amounts to \$590 million. This is the amount of money required to bring Ontario fire departments up to minimum current standards. Approximately 70% of this amount is needed by municipalities with a population of under 25,000.

Helping to insure the safety of Canadians and firefighters will also help boost the economy. The majority of fire apparatus and equipment is manufactured in North America and the industry employs approximately 110,000 people in North America. For example there are 16 fire truck manufacturers across Canada of which 6 are located in Ontario. Many of the vehicle parts suppliers are the same companies that supply the automotive sector. As most apparatus and equipment can be manufactured and delivered within 3 – 12 months, infrastructure dollars combined with municipal fire department reserve dollars can go to work in the economy immediately.

In summary, helping equip the fire service will not only better protect our citizens and firefighters but will also help maintain jobs here in Ontario. We urge you to support this request to include fire apparatus, equipment and structures as eligible categories under any provincial or federal government infrastructure program.

We look forward to your support.

Your partner in public safety,



Richard Boyes,  
President

cc. Minister Bartolucci, Community Safety and Correctional Services  
Minister Smitherman, Energy and Infrastructure