

Recruitment & Retention of Volunteer Firefighters

July 1, 2009

2009

“With more than 6000 volunteer firefighters serving the people of this province, it was clear from the start we were in the presence of valiant individuals, who through sheer determination and commitment want to make the fire protection services throughout this great province better for generations to come.”

Committee Finding on
How Best to Enhance
Recruitment and
Retention Within the
Volunteer Fire Service

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Preamble

Over the past 12 months, Fire and Emergency Services – Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators have been engaged in a very valuable dialogue with stakeholders surrounding the issue and concerns with recruitment and retention in the volunteer fire service.

Throughout this period of time, members of the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Committee have been blessed with the opportunity to interact and speak with some of Newfoundland's and Labrador's finest community leaders. When we consider the sheer number of volunteer firefighters our province employs in over 400 municipalities and local service districts, it was not hard to be humbled by the commitment to family, friends and community present everywhere throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Very few people take every opportunity they can to save lives, property and the environment, but these individuals do just that each and every day they are called into action, both directly and indirectly.

With more than 6000 volunteer firefighters serving the people of this province, it was clear from the start we were in the presence of valiant individuals, who through sheer determination and commitment want to make the fire protection services throughout this great province better for generations to come.

On behalf of the committee comprising of representatives from Fire and Emergency Services– Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators, we want to thank each and every firefighter, mayor, deputy mayor, councilor and municipal administrator that have contributed to our report by way of their knowledge and expertise.

Newfoundland and Labrador would not be the safe and secure place to live that it is without their continued support and commitment. Our sincerest thanks.

Introduction

Throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, there are approximately 300 fire departments comprising over 6000 volunteer firefighters. The capabilities of each department may vary, but their role and responsibilities are the same – to save lives, property and the environment.

In 2008, members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services approached the provincial Fire Commissioner and requested that a working group/committee be established to research and report on what many considered a serious emerging issue – recruitment and retention. While the terms of reference for the committee’s work was not immediately defined, it was soon clear that all stakeholders needed to be brought to the table before a report of any kind could be developed. Shortly thereafter, officials from Fire and Emergency Services-Newfoundland and Labrador (FESNL), the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services (NLAFS), along with members of the board of directors of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) and the Professional Municipal Administrators (PMA) began drafting a terms of reference in anticipation of a report to be submitted to each organization for consideration.

Committee members include Mr. Bradley Power (Chair) and Mr. Tony Rose from Fire and Emergency Services-Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Melvin Harnum and Mr. John Paul from the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services, Mr. Larry Hall and Mr. Keith Keating of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, and Mr. Derek Bragg of the Professional Municipal Administrators Association. Each member has a vested interest or affiliation with the provincial fire protection services sector.

Terms of Reference

The Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Committee was bound by the following terms of reference:

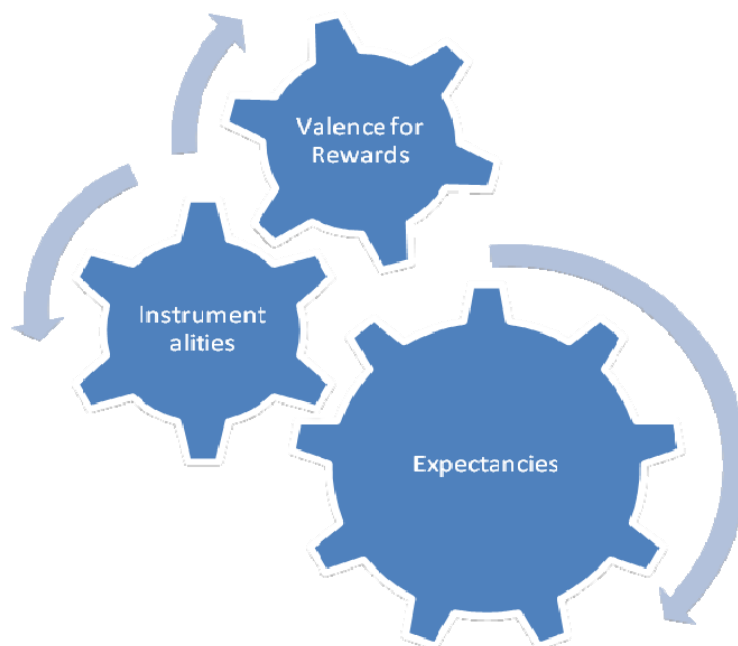
1. The Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Committee (the Committee), will consult with regional municipal councils and fire chiefs/departments to identify and outline current recruitment and retention policies and procedures/programs that may be in place, and furthermore evaluate the success of these programs based upon the current membership numbers within the specific municipality/region;
2. The Committee will identify any positive or negative aspects of the recruitment and retention program in place within municipalities throughout the province;
3. The Committee will explore and identify the reason(s) for low recruitment numbers in the volunteer fire service;
4. The Committee will explore and identify the reason(s) for low retention within the volunteer fire service;
5. The Committee will provide stakeholders with a report outlining the issues associated with recruitment and retention in the volunteer fire service;
6. The Committee will provide suggestions as to how stakeholders may rectify and/or reverse the declining membership within the province's volunteer fire services;
7. Further to approval, the Committee may devise a comprehensive recruitment and retention program to institute throughout the province, if recommended.

What Are Recruitment and Retention?

To determine if a recruitment and retention problem exists within a fire department, the administrators or chief must ask him or herself much more than whether or not there are enough firefighters to ride the truck, they must ask themselves do they have sufficient human resources for: suppression, prevention, public education, administration, inspections, support and logistics, apparatus and other tasks. Although many departments can function safely with 10 members, a fully operation department able to tackle any and all situations requires resources related to all of the above. However, in Newfoundland and Labrador, many departments lack some aspects of the required criteria.

Recruitment for the purpose of this report can be defined as the active solicitation of human resources for the purpose of providing safe and adequate fire protection within a city or town. Retention relates directly to the ability to keep or sustain members for the long-term.

Recruitment and retention relates directly to motivation. Motivation can be categorized as an individuals choice to initiate a certain action or task (such as joining a department), expend certain amounts of effort on that task (participation through training, social activities, etc.), and his/her persistence in expending effort over a period of time. The committee observed a volunteer firefighters' motivation to expend effort on a given task is determined by three sets of perceptions: expectancies, instrumentalities, and the valence for rewards.



In relation to expectancies, firefighters who spend numerous hours on training and enhancing their skills as firefighters believe that the more effort they put in the greater effect they will have on their department. As an example, they expect a higher level of fire protection because of their contribution. Instrumentalities relate directly to the belief that improved performance/services deserve greater rewards. Finally, valence for rewards is the perceived attractiveness that a firefighter may have toward the reward such as knowing they will receive compensation for their effort or knowing they saved a life.

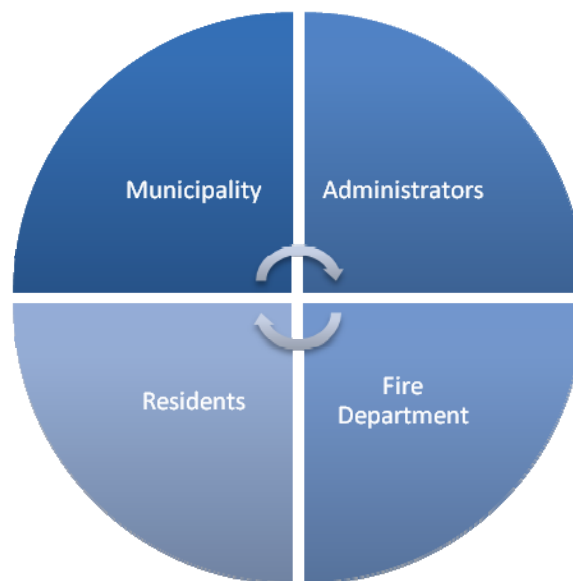
It was evident throughout our consultation with fire departments, municipalities and local service districts that recruitment and indeed retention can be clearly identified as a barrier to providing effective fire service in many Newfoundland and Labrador communities. Our committee agreed that we must ask the difficult question, why?

History of Fire Protection Services and Municipal Government

Throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, there are many examples of fire departments that were incorporated long before a municipality was established. Our group has observed on many occasions that there is an unclear delineation between roles and responsibilities related to the operation of fire protection - essentially “who should be doing what.” We concluded this has a direct effect on recruitment and retention efforts. The concept of a long established department not being attractive to younger individuals is ever present. Bridging this gap and receiving support from local elected officials through open dialogue is where success can be found.

However, it is just as important to note that many municipalities support their local fire department through great effort. By providing strong support throughout the budgeting process, allocating essential funding for equipment and training, and by fostering an open dialogue with departmental officers, a municipality and its fire department can operate in complete synergy.

Our committee found that this “ideal” scenario is indeed present in many communities, and we deem it important enough to stress at the early states of this report that many other communities have the ability and willingness to foster such a strong relationship, it is just a matter of opening communication and realizing each member of both a town council and a fire department play an essential role in the daily operation of a municipality.



Secondary Research on Recruitment and Retention

During the inaugural months, the committee reviewed a number of reports developed by other national and international groups pertaining to volunteer recruitment and retention. Although the reports were from different regions with different needs and outlooks, there are many similarities that were of importance to our research. These reports include:

- U.S. Fire Administration - Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services. Challenges and Solutions (FA-310/May 2007)
- Public Safety Guidelines – Office of the Ontario Fire Marshall. Volunteer Fire Service Personnel Recruitment and Retention (PFSG 04-84-13)

Some of the key points extracted from these reports that correlate and/or are consistent with the finding of our group include:

1. First and foremost, no one wants to join a sinking ship. A fire department must be organized, respected, and credible and have a good public image in order to attract good people.
2. In many jurisdictions, no one single entity is holding fire departments accountable for the way in which they are operating.
3. Support from local councils is important. There must be direct relations with the Fire Department. Mandatory fire protection fees should be implemented and a budget line specifically for the fire department should be implemented.
4. Fire departments must send the correct recruitment message and screen applicants. The process must be fair and transparent.
5. Departments should appoint an individual within their department responsible for recruitment and retention, similar to fire prevention and inspections.
6. Getting something for nothing is no longer acceptable in the volunteer service. Volunteers need to be compensated in some way.
7. Tax payers who expect a certain level of service, should be the ones to pay for it.

Each point extracted from external reports was intriguing to our group to say the least. This is because on many occasions, our stakeholders expressed the same sentiments and concerns. Our

committee will incorporate many of these points in the recommendations section further throughout this report.

Primary Research

From the beginning, it was evident that feedback and the opinions of individuals within our province's municipalities were to be the most important aspect of our committee's research. We utilized four opportunities to gather said information and feedback.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR ASSOCIATION OF FIRE SERVICES

Between July 4 and 7 of 2008, members of our committee held a workshop with over 150 members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services (NLAFS) 44th Annual Convention. This session provided deep insight into the perception of recruitment and retention by provincial fire protection personnel.

This valuable dialogue shaped many suggestions pertaining to the causes for recruitment and retention issues in some of our provincial fire departments, and also provided the committee with a number of suggestions and recommendations to be discussed within this report.

MUNICIPALITIES NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

During the Annual Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) convention in Corner Brook on October 8-11, 2008, over 120 members of various municipalities convened on an early morning session to discuss volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention. The turnout for this session was spectacular and it was said that it was one of the most interesting discussions of the entire weekend.

The outcome included many of the same suggestions derived from the NLAFS AGM, but with a municipal twist. It is important to note that many municipal councilors and mayors advocated to their colleagues how to begin taking fire protection more seriously, (more funding, more discussion, etc.). There was also significant discussion surrounding municipal taxing related to fire protection. It was obvious that the vast membership of MNL do consider fire protection as a vital and very important service within their cities and towns. Many of their suggestions and comments have shaped our recommendations further in this report.

PROFESSIONAL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATORS

The Annual General Meeting of the Professional Municipal Administrators (PMA - Formerly the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Municipal Administrators) was held on April 23-26, 2008 in Corner Brook. Again, this was another opportunity to solicit feedback from another facet of fire protection administration – the town administrators themselves.

Feedback was similar to that of the MNL conference, with many in attendance promoting the importance of regular communication between a town/city and their fire department. Many of

these individuals work with the fire departments daily, and it was refreshing to see how everyone agreed that fire protection was an essential municipal service, and furthermore there was a keen interest to make it better for the future. Many of the suggestions attained from this conference will be discussed in recommendations section of this report.

M.H.A. CONSULTATIONS

The Member for the House of Assembly in the District of Lewisporte, Mr. Wade Verge, was kind enough to undertake a number of consultations with his fellow colleagues for the purpose of our report. His focus remained on M.H.A.s from districts that were classified as “rural districts” and had at least one volunteer fire department within. His consultations were presented in a report to our committee.

There was no question that Mr. Verge’s research tapped a valuable group of individuals who advocate and work on behalf of many of their local fire departments, municipalities and local service districts regularly. His contribution was very valuable, and much appreciated.

His recommendations include:

1. Involvement in a fire department needs to be an enjoyable and an engaging activity. There were no reported problems with recruitment or retention in fire departments that are vibrant, active and socially healthy. Getting together for social activities helps to build camaraderie and commitment to the department. Local departments and communities should not underestimate the importance of “the social aspect” of fire fighting.
2. Firefighters need more recognition for the good work that they perform. Towns or regions that sponsor recognition dinners and other events that recognize Firefighters for their work seem to have fewer problems with recruitment and retention.
3. Plan to involve youth. Those departments that have made a deliberate effort to involve youth have had great success in attracting them to the force.
4. Participation of females needs to be more widely encouraged.
5. Provide all departments with full uniforms. When firefighters attend community events representing their department they need to be in full uniform. Having a well kept and fitting uniform will enhance the feeling of pride within the individual as they represent their fire department.
6. A plan needs to be put in place to support regionalization of departments and services. This should not be forced on communities but it should be fully supported and encouraged when the request comes from the grassroots.

7. Some communities offer complimentary snow clearing for firefighters. This initiative seems to be well received.
8. Complimentary licensing of one vehicle for firefighters was also recommended.
9. Enhance the provincial award program. It was generally felt that more recognition at the local level and the provincial level is needed.
10. Have a fitness room available for members at no personal cost to them. This will promote wellness and also encourage more social interaction with other members.
11. Training needs to be available regularly and at no cost to members.
12. Introduce a fire department fee at the municipal level to ensure funds are available for departments to carry out their duties.

Our committee completely agrees with all of Mr. Verge's recommendations and we have incorporated some of his points within our own set of recommendations for this reason. A copy of Mr. Verge's report in its entirety is available in the Appendix of this document.

SURVEYS

Another aspect of our research that provided the statistics we required to form recommendations came from a survey submitted to the members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators. A copy of the survey can be found in the report Appendix.

In total, 60 fire departments (including 278 firefighters) and 12 municipalities* took part in our survey. The following communities were represented:

Avondale	Gambo	Peterview
Badger	Gander	Placentia
Bay Roberts	Glovertown	Port Aux Choix
Bishops Falls	Goulds	Port Blandford
Bonnavista	Grand Bank	Portugal Cove - St. Philips
Botwood	Grand Falls-Windsor	Ramea
Buchans	Harbour Grace	Southwest Arm
Burgeo	Heart's Delight – Islington	Springdale
Burin	IOCC	St. Anthony
Campbellton	JBS	St. George's
Channel Port-Aux-Basque	Kippins	St. Lawrence
Churchill Falls	La Scie	Stephenville Crossing
Clarenville	Labrador City	Straights - Flowers Cove
Conception Bay South	Lewisport	Terra Nova
Cormack	Long Harbour - Mount Arlington Heights	Torbay
CPUM	Marystown	Triton
Deer Lake	Norman's Cove - Long Cove	Twillingate

Eastport	Northern Bight	Victoria
Fogo	Old Perlican	Wabush
Fortune	Pasedena	Whitbourne

*Some surveys did not indicate a specific municipality and therefore may not be represented in the list above.

The survey asked various questions related to annual budgets, fire department administration, and most importantly, the causes related to low recruitment and retention.

Causes of Low Recruitment and Retention

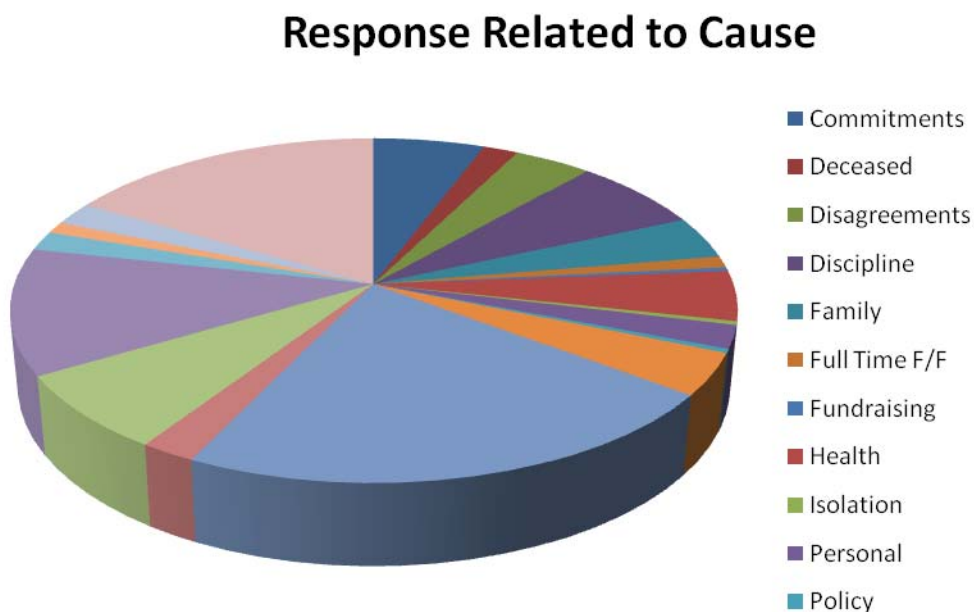
The following table outlines our survey results reflecting the causes of low recruitment and retention in the fire protection service. The corresponding pie chart outlines the number of respondents who used one or more of the noted choices in their.

In alphabetical order, there were 18 identified causes associated with low recruitment and retention based on survey results.

Commitment	Policy
Deceased	Relocation
Disagreements with councils and fire department	Relocation for work
Disciplinary-related	Resigned in protest
Family	Retirement
Full Time Firefighter	Retirement (age)
Fundraising	School-related
Health-related	Training
Isolation	Unknown
Personal	Work

Chart 1.0 – Responses

The pie chart below shows the vast number of responses related to individual causes attributed to low recruitment and retention.



Recruitment and Retention Efforts in Clarendville and Marystown

Our committee felt it was important to recognize the efforts by the Towns of Clarendville and Marystown to promote and encourage recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters within their communities.

The town and local fire departments developed a recruitment strategy which included a week long promotional campaign which included distributing posters and brochures to the surrounding region and soliciting support for their fire department. The campaign concluded with an open house where prospective members could visit under a no pressure (to join) environment.

This promotional campaign was a huge success with many new members being recruited in a short period of time. The campaign focused on the positive image of a fire department and its members and how one can attain great personal satisfaction being a firefighter. Our committee was pleased to see such a valiant effort by these fire departments and towns, and will recommend later in this report that other communities to do the same type of campaign.

Committee Recommendations

The following recommendations were compiled based upon primary and secondary research, as well as through significant discussion with stakeholders throughout the 12 months period this committee has been working together. All recommendations have been agreed upon by all representatives and reflect only some of the recommended solutions to recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

It is important to note that these recommendations relate to a small number of key points of concepts which include fire department operation, administration, training and communication. The recommendations have been generalized for a specific purpose as they may not reflect issues that affect each and every community. However, they do relate to and address the vast majority of the fire protection services, municipalities and local service districts throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

1. GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

It is recommended that committee stakeholders develop a guidebook/handbook identifying the roles and responsibilities of a fire department and municipality and/or local service district.

RATIONALE: Our committee has found that effective fire protection within our cities and towns requires an easy to read document that outlines (in great detail) the role and responsibilities of each stakeholder. Clear delineation of these roles and responsibilities relate back to the operation and administration of a department which can potentially make joining easier and less confusing for potential new members. If they know what their role is in the various positions within a fire department; and furthermore know who will provide what (such as budgeting, training, etc.), they will be more likely to transition into a department more easily.

RESPONSIBILITY: There is no question that all stakeholders must participate in the development of this document. It must be mandated as an essential piece of any fire department by both the associations and FESNL. The committee envisions that as communities come on board and see the benefit this type of document and seminar provides, other will come on board too. The committee recommends another working group of the same representation be developed immediately for this purpose. All stakeholders must be at the table for it to be effective.

2. REGIONALIZATION TEMPLATE

It is recommended that a template be devised that promotes regionalization of fire protection services in many areas of the province.

RATIONALE: On many occasions this concept was raised. Regionalization encompasses the pooling of resources whether specific to human resources or equipment availability. Knowing what we know today, and observing the successes some regions have had with this, our committee recommends that any opportunity to regionalize fire services be considered.

Essentially, two fire departments with low membership can easily become one fire department with just the right number of firefighters. This concept can provide various other benefits including larger financial resources, better use of current resources, joint funding applications, etc. This concept will require the support of all stakeholders and may require significant work on the part of FESNL and the Department of Municipal Affairs.

RESPONSIBILITY: It is recommended that a working group of all stakeholders begin to develop this template in consultation with the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Community Cooperation Resource Centre, as well as the Regional Cooperation Division of the Department of Municipal Affairs. This solution has proved effective in many parts of the province, and more opportunities are certainly available based on our research.

3. IMPROVING PUBLIC IMAGE

It is recommended that all stakeholders individually begin the process of developing opportunities where fire departments may enhance their public image.

RATIONALE: This concept was common throughout our research. The value of a fire department, in the eyes of the public and potential new recruits is often times measured by how organized and reputable a department is, and furthermore how credible their operation is. These concepts are solved through enhanced funding for the upkeep of buildings and equipment. Promoting a healthy image makes it more appealing to new members as they will feel as they are becoming part of something they can be proud of. The image of a poorly maintained fire hall, vehicle or equipment has in many cases prevented departments from attaining new members.

Similarly, we believe it is important for a municipality to hold its fire department accountable in respect of operation and image. If a department is to be attractive to new members, current members must be dedicated, must respond to calls, and have a visible conviction toward the services they offer. All aspects of fire protection must be taken seriously at all times. It is indeed a matter of life and death.

Accountability and pride in the department can enhance public image, and has the ability to make potential new members want to be part of the fire department.

RESPONSIBILITY: This recommendation will require the support of all stakeholders, including FESNL, NLAFS, MNL, PMA, fire departments, municipalities and local service districts.

4. ENHANCED TRAINING

It is recommended that more training opportunities be developed for new and current members of volunteer fire departments and more funding be allocated for this purpose.

Rational: It is impossible for all people to know all things. This is why regular training is essential. This issue has been raised in many instances by various organizations over the past number of years. There is no question that when you empower an individual with the skills they need to do a job they are more likely to stick with it. In relation to retention, the more engaged an individual is from the beginning and the more opportunity he or she is given to advance their knowledge, the more likely they are to carry it through their own lives, and pass it on to others.

To elaborate, there are a number of key issues related to the provision of training to new recruits. Specifically, minimum standards are required for the protection and safety of new firefighters. Effective leave provisions must be developed in consultation with employers for this purpose or wage recovery must be offered (it is not acceptable to expect an individual to give up annual leave or holidays to take part in training as is the current practice). There must be sound cost recovery associated with expenses for training such as gas, accommodations and meals. Training should be targeted to those departments in greatest need, as well.

Opportunities for fire departments to train their members are offered at the FESNL Training School. The real problem that exists (noting that the training itself is free), is firefighters who provide this essential service to their communities should not be expected to pay for it themselves. While the Municipal Training and Development Corporation (MTDC) offers a 50/50 cost recovery on training related to fire protection, very few communities get the opportunity to avail of it. This committee recommends that additional funding be allocated for this specific purpose to the MTDC, and municipalities and local service districts should recognize the need for training more actively.

Training provides the essential skills required to save lives. It is hard to believe that it is not readily available to all those willing to participate and learn, simply because of funding restraints. Our committee recommends that all stakeholders undertake a review of how training is provided in their area and to make every possible effort to send more firefighters to the FESNL Training Schools.

RESPONSIBILITY: FESNL, MNL, PMA, MTDC and municipalities and local service districts.

5. PUBLIC SUPPORT

It is recommended that municipalities, local service districts and all stakeholders solicit public support for recruitment and retention initiatives for their fire department by way of promoting the importance of fire protection services.

RATIONALE: A resounding sentiment heard by our committee from coast to coast was that residents expect their roads to be cleared of snow, and when a fire breaks out they expect it to be extinguished. There are always expectations when addressing essential services. Our committee believes that in many cases, the importance of fire protection is not recognized.

Stemming from what many consider a societal norm, as an example, snow storms occur often times weekly in Newfoundland and Labrador, while fire strike less frequently. But the question must be considered, does this make fire protection any less important than snow clearing? There is no doubt residents expect firefighters to respond when they call. To ensure this happens, public support must be garnered to approve the purchase of essential equipment and the various other needs of a fire department.

RESPONSIBILITY: FESNL, municipalities and local service districts.

6. PROVINCIAL FIRE PROTECTION AWARENESS DAY

It is recommended that all stakeholders observe a specific day/campaign geared toward public awareness and recruitment for fire protection services.

RATIONALE: To solicit the required public support need to establish strong fire departments our committee recommends a provincial campaign centred on an awareness day for recruitment and retention. This day can raise awareness about how tax dollars are spent within the fire protection services. It can give residents the ability to see where their money is going, and furthermore it can act as an essential recruiting tool by showing individuals the benefit of becoming involved. This awareness day must reach out to women and youth specifically and express the value of the skills gained as a volunteer firefighter.

Similar to the annual Municipal Awareness Day, municipalities and local service districts can outline some of the services different fire departments provide, including high angle rescue, ice/cold water rescue, medical response, vehicle extrication, etc. It should showcase the fire hall, equipment and current members. This concept will require the support of all stakeholders and be empowered by generic promotional materials such as a standard brochure, poster and provincial advertising. Again, this can relate to fostering a positive image of the local fire department as well.

RESPONSIBILITY: This recommendation will require the support of all stakeholders, including FESNL, NLAFS, MNL, PMA, fire departments, municipalities and local service districts.

7. EQUIPMENT

It is recommended that all stakeholders support the purchase of equipment necessary to sustain current memberships and purchases that allow for new members to have the essential equipment they need.

RATIONALE: There is no point recruiting new members if there are no tools or equipment for them to utilize. This is an issue within many fire departments through the province. On many occasions, new members have entered a fire department having to share bunker suits and other personal protective equipment. How can a fire department promote inclusion and retention of its members if individuals have to wait until a firefighter doesn't show up and only then can they use the spare equipment to respond to a fire? Notably, many new recruits do it.

The provision of essential equipment is important to any fire department. No extra equipment means no extra capacity. Recruitment and retention is all about capacity building and sustainability, and without the required gear, this is impossible. Many fire departments respond to this by only recruiting as many individuals as the number of bunker suits they own, when in actual fact, they may need more members to be effective in their duties. Departments must complete appropriate assessments in this regard before ever considering recruiting. There is a risk that bringing on a new recruit knowing in advance that no equipment is available may turn that individual for serving in the capacity in the future. This can be detrimental to a department.

Our committee recommends that stakeholders support the purchase of the required equipment for new members, and furthermore enact a replacement policy so that firefighters remain safe and have the tools they need to do their job at all times.

RESPONSIBILITY: FESNL, municipalities and local service districts.

8. COMMUNICATION

It is recommended that fire departments, municipalities and local service districts open the lines of communication between their respective members.

RATIONALE: All stakeholders need to remember they are on the same team. Strong collaboration between elected officials and volunteer firefighters is extremely important.

We have found that the most well organized and functioning fire departments have regular communication with their city/town specific to activities, needs, calls, training and staffing requirements. From our consultations we can conclude there is no doubt that fire protection is an essential service. Understanding how to best go about providing it may be the only hurdle to overcome, but it seems as though all involved see the need to enhance communication for the safety and security of residents. All outcomes related to better communication can help the recruitment and retention efforts when firefighters and departments are seen as a valued member of the team.

RESPONSIBILITY: This recommendation will require the support of all stakeholders, including FESNL, NLAFFS, MNL, PMA, fire departments, municipalities and local service districts.

Conclusion

When our committee began the monumental task of researching and making recommendations on volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention, we knew there would be no quick fix. We knew a collaborative effort from all stakeholders was required throughout our committee's process, and that the same approach is imperative in the future to make the aforementioned recommendations successful. The committee believes strongly that motivation and its various aspects are vital to the process of recruiting for the future. As well we agree communication is the other key to success. By working together - for one another - we can undoubtedly strengthen the fire protection services of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In conclusion, M.H.A. Wade Verge said it best in his consultation report when he says the key to recruitment and retention in our volunteer fire departments rests with volunteers taking pride in the work they perform. If an individual is proud of the work they do and they are proud of their Fire Department they've joined, they will take ownership of their department and be more committed to the cause. While monetary incentives may help attract and retain some members, it is recognized that this alone will not solve the recruitment and retention problem throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Fire departments need equipment, the firefighters need proper training, and all people involved need to know their communities, the Provincial Government and their residents appreciate the work they perform. This is the motivation that will drive volunteerism successfully into future generations.

Appendix A – Survey

Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Committee Survey

Committee Members: Bradley Power, Chair (FES-NL), Tony Rose (FES-NL), Melvin Harnum (NLAFS), John Paul (NLAFS), Derrick Bragg (NLAMA), Keith Keating (MNL), and Larry Hall (MNL).

Instructions:

Please fill out the following survey for the purpose to collect research about our province's volunteer fire departments directly from our municipal officials. Your contribution will provide very worthwhile information that may be used to strengthen this committee's report to the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Please utilize the envelope with pre-paid postage to send back your response if you are unable to attend the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Session, this weekend. If you require more space to write your answers, please staple additional pages to the survey. Thank you in advance.

1. What is the annual budget of your Fire Department? _____

2. Do you: (pertaining to your Fire Department)

Hold regular annual meetings or financial planning meetings? YES or NO

Have a fire services committee? YES or NO

Does your council receive monthly reports regarding:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| a. Activities | YES or NO |
| b. Equipment Needs | YES or NO |
| c. Calls | YES or NO |
| d. Training | YES or NO |
| e. Staffing | YES or NO |

3. Do you feel the regionalization of fire services in your area would be beneficial? Why or why not? ____

4. What level of protection does your council provide for Firefighters (Insurances, loss of income, etc.)? __

5. Are you having a recruitment or retention problem in your municipality? YES or NO

6. What do you feel the citizens of your town expect from their fire department? _____

7. What do you think are the causes of a lack of recruitment and retention of volunteer fire fighters? _____

8. What suggestions do you have from a council point of view for solving a recruitment or retention problem? _____

Thank you very much for your contribution to our committee!



Appendix B – M.H.A. Consultation

Volunteer Fire Departments

Input From M.H.A.'s

Recruitment Issues

Retention Issues

Recommendations for Future Growth.

Prepared by: Wade Verge
M.H.A. Lewisporte District

Prepared for: Honorable Dave Denine
Minister Municipal Affairs

Introduction

On April 19, 2008 at the request of Honorable Dave Denine, Minister of Municipal Affairs, I attended a committee meeting of the Working Group on Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters in Gander, NL. At this meeting I advised members that, to complement the work they were doing, and at the request of the Minister of Municipal Affairs I would be consulting with a number of M.H.A.'s to gather their input as it pertains to recruitment and retention of Firefighters in their respective districts. Bradley Power of FESNL, Chair of the Working Group was assigned to be my contact and liaise in this regard.

Dates and Attendees

All meetings were conducted at the Executive Boardroom in Department of Municipal Affairs. See table below for Dates and List of Attendees:

April 29, 2008	May 1, 2008	May 6, 2008	May 8, 2008
Wade Verge Lewisporte			
Brad Power Dept. of M.A.	Brad Power	Brad Power	Brad Power
Tony Cormet Port Au Port	Ray Hunter GFW Green B. South	Clayton Forsey Exploits	Darryl Kelley Humber Valley
James Baker Labrador West	Elizabeth Marshall Topsail	Susan Sullivan GFW Buchans	Keith Hutchings Ferryland
Harry Harding Bonavista North	Terry Loder Bay of Islands	Wallace Young St. Barbe	Darin King Grand Bank
	John Dinn Kilbride	Calvin Peach Bellevue	Derrick Dalley Isles of Notre Dame

Findings

1. A number of M.H.A.'s reported that their Fire Departments were having trouble recruiting and retaining volunteers. However, an equal number reported no problems with recruitment or retention.
2. Some Fire Departments have an aging group of volunteers. However, in some cases Fire Departments had many youth involved.

3. Seasonal Workers affect numbers. Numbers are reported as being low in the summer season while many of the seasonal workers are employed. As well, many communities are experiencing lower numbers due to the fact that an increasing number of residents are employed in Western Canada and commuting back and forth to their work locations for varying amounts of time.
4. M.H.A.'s report positive experiences in cases where Fire departments have regionalized services. Important to remember that regionalization has occurred with support of and input from communities affected.
5. Some volunteers decide not to get involved because of the expectation they have to be involved in fund raising efforts.
6. Most M.H.A.'s felt that aging and poorly functioning equipment frustrated many volunteers. This frustration negatively affected morale and also impacted the willingness of residents to get involved and to stay involved.
7. Lack of important training opportunities was mentioned by several members as another possible reason for some volunteers leaving the force.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations were presented by M.H.A.'s as possible solutions to the recruitment and retention problem. All participants could easily point to specific examples of very vibrant and successful Fire Departments within their districts. However, most participants also cited examples of departments that were encountering problems with recruitment and retention of volunteers.

1. Involvement in a Fire Department needs to be an enjoyable and an engaging activity. There were no reported problems with recruitment or retention in Fire Departments that are vibrant, active and socially healthy. Getting together for social activities helps to build camaraderie and commitment to the department. Local Departments and communities should not under estimate the importance of "the social aspect" of Fire Departments.
2. Firefighters need more recognition for the good work that they perform. Towns or regions that sponsor recognition dinners and other events that recognize Firefighters for their work seem to have fewer problems with recruitment and retention.
3. Plan to involve youth. Those departments that have made a deliberate effort to involve youth have had great success in attracting them to the force.
4. Participation of females needs to be more widely encouraged.
5. Provide all Departments with full uniforms. When Firefighters attend community events representing their department they need to be in full uniform. Having a well kept and

fitting uniform will enhance the feeling of pride within the individual as they represent their Fire Department.

6. A plan needs to be put in place to support regionalization of departments and services. This should not be forced on communities but it should be fully supported and encouraged when the request comes from the grassroots.
7. Some communities offer complimentary snow clearing for Firefighters. This initiative seems to be well received.
8. Complimentary licensing of one vehicle for firefighters was also recommended.
9. Enhance the provincial award program. It was generally felt that more recognition at the local level and the provincial level is needed.
10. Have a fitness room available for members at no personal cost to them. This will promote wellness and also encourage more social interaction with other members.
11. Training needs to be available regularly and at no cost to members.
12. Introduce a Fire Department fee at the municipal level to ensure funds are available for departments to carry out their duties.

Conclusion

All members agreed that the key to recruitment and retention in our volunteer Fire departments rests with volunteers taking pride in the work they perform. If an individual is proud of the work they do and they are proud of their Fire Department they will take ownership of their Department and they will also be more committed to the cause. While monetary incentives may help attract and retain some members it is recognized that this alone will not solve the recruitment and retention problem. Fire departments need good equipment, the Firefighters need proper training and all people involved need to know their communities and their provincial government appreciate the work they perform.