



News Release

The Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada welcomes report supporting the creation of an Indigenous Fire Marshal's Office

Ottawa, June 22, 2018 – The Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada (AFAC) welcomes the release of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs report titled “From the Ashes: Reimagining Fire Safety and Emergency Management in Indigenous Communities.”

The committee undertook this study because First Nations communities are disproportionately affected by life-threatening and devastating fires for a number of reasons, such as their relative remoteness, isolation in fire-prone areas, limited access to emergency services, and often lack of proper fire protection services. According to the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (2007), this results in a per capita fire incidence rate in these communities that is 2.4 times higher and loss of life due to fire that is 10 times higher than in the rest of the country.

The committee concluded that prevention and public education save lives and that the lack of building and fire codes increases the risk of fire, that the current funding model is inadequate, and that a national reporting and data collection framework is required. To address these issues, and others related to fire safety and prevention in First Nation communities, the Committee supports the federal government's creation of an independent Indigenous Fire Marshal's Office (IFMO) in collaboration with First Nations.

“We have long been strong advocates for the creation of an IFMO,” said AFAC's President Arnold Lazare, “so we applaud the Committee's leadership in recognizing the positive impact an IFMO will have in addressing serious fire safety gaps in Indigenous communities and for fully supporting its creation.”

As the Committee report outlines, the role of an IFMO Office should include: undertaking public education and awareness campaigns, implementing standardized training for fire safety officials, developing and enforcing fire safety standards and building codes, and conducting regular building inspections and data collection.

“AFAC, with the support of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), is currently leading a project for the creation of an IFMO to support communities in their efforts to improve life safety and protection of people, property and the environment,” Lazare added. “We look forward to continuing to work closely with First Nations communities and ISC to take this project from a planning phase to implementation.”

For details on all eleven recommendations see the [Committee Report](#).

-30-

The Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada (AFAC) is a united body of regional First Nation Fire Protection Associations committed to the transformation of fire and emergency services for all First Nation communities across Canada. Its overarching goal is to eliminate loss of life and loss of property.



For further information:

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