

Support for Fire Protection Services Act
Q&As
Date: February 27, 2026

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Q: What are the changes you've introduced?

- The Province introduced the Support for Fire Protection Services Act on Monday, February 23 to strengthen fire services across Nova Scotia.
- The legislation is part of the Province's ongoing commitment to strengthening the fire services sector.
- It will help ensure consistent training standards across the province and support procurement to get best pricing for purchasing vehicles, equipment and insurance, helping fire departments reduce costs.
- Under the new act, responsibility for the *Fire Safety Act* and *Rural Fire District Act* will transfer from the Minister of Municipal Affairs to the Minister of Emergency Management.
- The Minister of Emergency Management will provide oversight for municipal fire services and set provincewide standards for:
 - fire services
 - firefighter training and certification
 - personal protective equipment
 - transition support for fire services that want to transition to a municipal model
 - resources for fire protection service planning, delivery and reporting.
- Fire departments and fire service commissions that are not currently part of a municipal fire service will remain as is. In other words, no changes are being made to the legislation governing fire commissions, fire brigades, fire associations, or voluntary societies.
- The legislation also enables the creation of an Office of the Fire Commissioner, the first step in providing provincial oversight, co-ordination and support to municipalities and fire service providers. The creation of this Office was recommended by FSANS in the Governance Review.
- The legislation requires all municipalities – whether they oversee fire services or not to:
 - conduct a fire protection service review, to ensure municipalities and fire departments make evidence-based decisions about the services they provide to their community

- ensure that local firefighter competencies, training and personal protective equipment meet the service standard required by the fire protection service review
- participate in a common records management system
- Fire service providers, such as fire commissions must also conduct fire protection service reviews

Q: What isn't changing?

- This legislation does not change section 293 of the *Municipal Government Act*.
- Municipalities may maintain and provide fire and emergency services but will not be required to do so.

Q: What will the Province be working on in the coming months and years?

- The Department of Emergency Management will be focused on strengthening fire services by:
 - Operationalizing the Office of the Fire Commissioner
 - Supporting the transition for municipalities that want to provide fire services
 - Rolling out fire training across the Province
 - Building regional fire training capacity (instructors and facilities)
 - Developing standards and regulations in consultation with municipalities and fire services
 - Funding has been provided to begin this work, and we will develop future year budgets over the course of the next 12 months.

WHY LEGISLATION NEEDED

Q: Why are you making these changes?

- Over the past year, we've taken a hard, honest look at the state of fire services across the province.
- These changes reflect the recommendations coming out of the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia's (FSANS) governance review last year.
- Firefighters told us loud and clear what's working, what's not, and what needs to change. They want:
 - Better governance
 - Safe training
 - Standardized services.
- For far too long, the sector has been struggling under a patchwork of funding, governance arrangements with municipalities, and service levels around the province have been inconsistent.

- So, we're tackling it head on, by working *with* the fire service sector and municipalities.
- Over the last few months, our staff have met with over 700 fire chiefs and deputy chiefs, municipalities, fire service coordinators, and fire commission leaders to figure out how to implement the 40 recommendations from the recent FSANS report.
- Together with the sector, we'll build a sustainable, effective and safe sector for our firefighters.

Q: Did you consult with firefighters on these changes?

- Yes, in 2025, firefighters told the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia exactly what they needed in the governance review.
- There was also a value-for-money audit of the Nova Scotia Firefighters Training School, which also revealed governance and safety issues.
- In September 2025, the Department of Municipal Affairs introduced legislation that put the framework in place to consult with the fire service sector and introduce legislation to strengthen fire services by September 2026.
- In January of this year, we began extensive engagement sessions with fire chiefs, deputy fire chiefs, fire commissioners, fire service coordinators and municipal CAOs across the province to figure out how to implement the recommendations coming out of that FSANS report.
- We have held 15 sessions with participation from more than 700 participants across the Province.

SUPPORT FOR MUNICIPALITIES

Q: What supports will be available to municipalities to help alignment with the new legislation and a 3-year transition to a modern fire service system?

- For those municipalities that want to work with the province to adopt a municipally led service model, we will provide transition supports.
- The Province will work on shared/joint procurement and insurance options to achieve economies of scale.
- The Province will support municipalities with tools and templates that build capacity and coordination within the system including: fire service maps, service agreement templates, and a uniform risk assessment tool to inform fire service reviews and planning
- The Province will also provide a Fire Records Management System to all municipalities and fire service providers in the Province.

- Establish the Fire Training Advisory Committee (FTAC) and Interim Regional Training Plans, based on data from site visits and local training need assessments.
- Roll out of hybrid (Provincial/Municipal Shared) delivery of Level 1 training.
- Remove barriers that limit access to provincially recognized training (e.g. Class 3 license barriers, access to live fire, etc.)
- Initiate provincial-municipal collaboration to create Regional Training Centres, shared access to mobile burn trailers and a central site (airport) with facilities for specializing training.
- The Province will work with the Fire Training Advisory Committee (FTAC) and fire service leaders to develop a continuum of firefighter qualification (competency-based), certification, and instructor standards

GOVERNANCE

Q: What would an Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) be responsible for?

- An OFC was one of the recommendations coming out of the FSANS report.
- The OFC will be a home in government for all matters relating to fire safety and fire services. The Fire Commissioner will oversee all aspects of fire safety and services and provide clear, consistent direction to municipalities and all fire service stakeholders through standards and regulations.
- It will also lead the development of a new training model that provides accountability, oversight, and equitable access to training resources and professional certification.

Q: Do these amendments affect DNR's wildland firefighters?

- No. These amendments only affect volunteer and career firefighters.

IMPACT ON FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND FIRE FIGHTERS

Q: Will training standards be set so high that we lose volunteers?

- There is a role for everyone in Nova Scotia's fire services
- The FSANS Standards Committee is actively working on developing policies for minimum standards for the Nova Scotia Fire Service. See their work here: <https://www.fsans.ns.ca/documents-forms/standards>
- FSANS advocates for Firefighter service levels in structural firefighting:
 - Exterior (Defensive) Firefighter
 - Interior (Offensive) Firefighter
 - Support/Other Roles

- These levels determine the risk, training requirements, and equipment required for firefighters at a scene.
- The new regional training model will ensure that firefighters can access training to achieve the level they desire, close to home and delivered in a hybrid environment through on-line classes for appropriate sections of the curriculum.
- Firefighters will be engaged in standardizing the colour code for the service level tags.

CERTIFICATION / TRAINING

Q. Will legislation require all firefighters in Nova Scotia to be Level 1 certified?

- We want to be clear that there is place for every volunteer firefighter in the province. We continue to work with the fire service across Nova Scotia to ensure the legislation and standards are achievable across the province.
- Our objective is to ensure standard baseline.
- Achieving Level 1 certification will be a choice for individual firefighters to make, but it will not be a requirement.
- Firefighters in exterior or support positions may opt to only complete the required components of Level 1 training, as defined by their role.
- In developing new Training and Certification Standards, the Province will ensure that a variety of training options are provided in alignment with the roles that volunteers want to play.

Q. Will there be one central fire training school in the province?

- Through the FSANS report, it was recommended that training centres be established regionally so firefighters can train locally and avoid excessive travel.
- We will work toward a hub-and-spoke model for a central training facility for higher-level firefighter training and Incident Command training, with more basic training being offered locally, as recommended by the FSANS report.

VALUE-FOR-MONEY AUDIT & GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Q: What were the results of the value-for-money audit of the Nova Scotia Firefighters School?

- The findings of the report were troubling.
- They show a consistent failure to uphold a culture of safety, and serious, unaddressed safety-related deficiencies.
- The report also identified a dysfunctional governance structure, outdated bylaws, non-existent committees, lack of strategic planning and a decline in infrastructure.

- As a result, the Province cut ties with the training school, and established the Fire Training Advisory Committee, which is tasked with building out standardized training for firefighters across the province.

Q: What were the results of the broader fire services review by FSANS?

- There were common themes noted across the province.
- They were:
 - Sustainable funding models
 - Standardized and accessible training
 - Improved recruitment and retention supports
 - Clearer governance structures
 - Consistent and coordinated dispatch systems
 - Enhanced health and safety measures
 - Equitable access to equipment and infrastructure
 - Defined levels of service based on risk assessments
 - Stronger interoperability and mutual aid arrangements
 - Sustainable approaches to medical first response.

Q: Who contributed to the fire services review?

- FSANS can speak to the details of who helped inform the review, but we know that hundreds of firefighters and fire service leaders participated in the process.
- In their final report, FSANS reported that the recommendations were based on conversations with hundreds of firefighters at 30 in-person meetings and 400 responses to a consultation survey.
- NSFAM and AMANS also provided feedback on behalf of their members.