

**Support for Fire Protection Services Act  
Questions & Answers**

**Questions and Answers Shared on March 3, 2026**

Class 3 Licenses

**Q: Will the department ensure access to class 3 licenses?**

- Under the new *Traffic Safety Act* (DPW), firefighters don't need to have a class 3 license to drive a fire truck.
- The new Act does allow for regulations to be made around it, however.
- The Fire Training Advisory Committee is working with the Department of Public Works and the registry of motor vehicles to make it easier for firefighters to get a Level 3 license through the advisory committee. We are currently developing a plan for that.

Funding & 50-50 Fundraising

**Q: Who pays for fire services?**

- Bill 186 does not change how fire services are funded in Nova Scotia.
- Funding models vary widely from community-to-community and across fire service organization types, services offered, and the involvement of municipalities.
- There is no one uniform/standard approach to funding fire services. Fire services are primarily paid for through a combination of municipal taxation, area rates and levies paid by users within a given service boundary, through grant funding, and fundraising such as the 50-50 Lottery and other charitable donations.

**Q: Will we still have to fund-raise for equipment and buildings?**

- We have heard from many fire fighters that they are tired of having to fund raise for breathing apparatus.
- Bingos, Chase the Ace and other fund raisers take time and there is a dwindling number of volunteers to do the work.
- Provincial standards for equipment and training will ensure that in municipally-led fire services, fund-raising for a set standard of equipment will no longer be required.
- Having said that, firefighters are unanimous in wanting the 50/50 to stay in place and fundraising is part of the current way that fire services are funded in the Province due to the variety of voluntary organizations and societies that provide fire services in rural areas.

**Q: How does Bill 186 address sustainable funding for fire services?**

- We will be working closely with municipalities and fire service providers over the next 3 years to build capacity to transition to a new fire service delivery model. As we collaborate, we are committed to have conversations and finding solutions to support sustainability so that all Nova Scotians have access to adequate fire protection.

**Q: Will the Province provide grants?**

- In this year's budget, we have committed to strengthening fire services through a \$3M investment.
- Other initiatives along with their respective budgets will be determined as we continue the process of modernizing the fire service.

**Q: Who will be eligible for transition funding?**

- Municipalities and fire service providers that are interested in moving to a new, modern fire service delivery model lead by municipalities will be eligible for transition funding.

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards

**Q: Does Bill 186 require that all municipalities and fire service providers adopt and adhere to NFPA Standards?**

- No, Bill 186 does not adopt NFPA standards for Nova Scotia nor does it require municipalities and fire service providers to comply with these standards.
- Over the next three years, the Office of the Fire Commissioner will be working closely with subject matter experts and the fire service sector to develop regulations and standards that work for Nova Scotia.
- We heard clearly that organizations have concerns and questions about what it means to adopt NFPA standards. Some fire service organizations shared that meeting these standards would have a negative impact on their operations.
- While FSANS recommends NFPA standards as the base model they also recognize that they must be balanced with local needs. To learn more about FSANS recommendations, please visit: <https://www.fsans.ns.ca/documents-forms/standards>.

Training

**Q: What is the plan for training and training-related infrastructure such as Regional and Mobile Facilities?**

- The Department of Emergency Management invested in new firefighter training equipment to ensure firefighters across Nova Scotia have access to safe, modern and consistent training no matter where they live.
- The investment includes two mobile burn units and four propane-fuelled training props, which will expand hands-on firefighter training capacity across the province. They can be moved and utilized as necessary in providing training for firefighters across the province.
- Regional training facilities will be established over the coming years through strategic partnerships with municipalities, fire departments and fire associations across Nova Scotia.
- This initiative is intended to enhance training accessibility, reduce travel demands for firefighters, and strengthen regional capacity by delivering high quality training within local communities.

### Fire Service Reviews & Community Risk Assessments

#### **Q: Will municipalities and fire service providers be able to conduct their own community risk assessments to ensure local needs and risks are considered in the fire service reviews?**

- Yes, municipalities and fire service providers are required and best positioned to conduct fire service reviews in their communities.
- The Province will provide all organizations with a free of charge risk-based assessment tool to support this process but the assessment will be done at the local level with local expertise.
- The Province will provide training and support on how to use the tool.

### Office of the Fire Commissioner

#### **Q: How will the Fire Commissioner be chosen?**

- The Fire Commissioner will be hired through a competitive, public process.
- The Minister will appoint the Fire Commissioner in accordance with the *Civil Service Act*.

#### **Q: I'm looking for more details, but many topics are covered through regulation-making authorities?**

- This legislation is permissive, and creates a coordinated home in government for fire safety and services with the Fire Commissioner under the Minister of Emergency Management.
- It grants the Province the ability to create regulations and standards. Developing these takes time, collaboration and planning.
- Once hired, the Fire Commissioner will lead consultation and development of regulations and standards governing both fire safety and services.

- Fire service providers, experts in the fire safety field, and municipalities will be thoughtfully engaged in developing regulations.

**Q: Who will sit on fire protection advisory boards?**

- The Fire Commissioner will be responsible for any fire safety and services committees, councils, or subject matter expert advisory groups.
- As such, no decisions have been made on the Advisory Board. Like the Firefighter Training Advisory Committee (FTAC), we will of course, ensure that the Board aligns with best practices in governance and that there is regional representation from across the Province.

Municipalities

**Q: Why did the Province not adopt the FSANS recommendation to change to a new model where municipalities are required to provide fire services (also known as “may” to “shall”)?**

- In Fall 2025, we committed to speaking with the fire service sector to understand how to implement FSANS recommendations. FSANS recommended that municipalities be required to provide fire services.
- During consultation, we heard that the sector is not yet ready to make this change.
- We will be working closely with municipalities and fire service providers over the next 3 years to build capacity to transition to a more modern service delivery system.

**Q: Are municipalities and fire service providers being asked to provide more fire services to people in their communities?**

- Municipalities AND fire service providers will need to conduct a fire service review using a community risk assessment tool.
- This tool will help determine what fire risks and needs are present in a specific community and help align services to mitigating these risks.
- It is too early to say what changes will result from the review process. Based on current evidence, we understand that many communities already have appropriate levels of service however there are some communities where additional services may be required and others where fewer services will be required.

Timeline

**Q: What is the timeline of Bill 186 and the fire modernization project?**

- Once the legislation receives Royal Assent, it will be in force.
- Over the next 3 years, we will establish the Office of the Fire Commissioner, we will work with the fire service sector to develop regulations, and we will build their capacity to transition to a more modern service delivery model.

## Questions & Answers Shared on February 26, 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
  - Support 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 IS 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.
- Support 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.