

SENATE SECURITY REPORT UNDERLINES NEED FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION: FIRE CHIEFS

For Immediate Release

WHITEHORSE, September 24, 2008 – Canada’s Fire Chiefs called for all political parties to act on an emergency preparedness report on the state of Canada’s readiness. The report was recently released by the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence.

The nation’s Fire Chiefs called for action on the report at the 100th anniversary conference of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs being held in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory.

Calgary Fire Chief Bruce Burrell is CAFC’s newly-elected President. He said, “We have been warning that Canada is not prepared to address the type of threat that a major natural or man-made disaster could cause. Experience shows that preparedness for an effective first response can often avert escalation of an emergency.”

“The Senate’s report describes in great detail what needs to be done by the federal government to help first responders at the municipal level deal with catastrophic emergencies,” CAFC President Burrell said.

Among issues identified by the Senate Committee that are particularly important to the Canadian Fire Services are:

- a lack of funding for municipalities for maintenance, training and more appropriate equipment once local vulnerabilities are identified;
- poor emergency preparedness collaboration among federal, provincial and municipal governments; and
- a failure of senior governments to consult municipal first responders to determine their actual needs.

Emergency first responders in Canadian municipalities lack the resources to protect lives and property during major natural or man-made disasters. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs urges all Canadians to challenge every candidate in the federal election to give assurances that emergency first responders will receive support from the federal government to deal with these outstanding public safety issues as identified by the Senate Committee.

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