

## **BUDGET IGNORES ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF FIRE SERVICES**

### **For Immediate Release**

**Ottawa, January 29, 2009** – The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) today expressed disappointment that the Budget did not recognize that supporting the Canadian Fire Services should be regarded as an economic imperative deserving urgent attention.

“The Fire Services are crucial underpinnings of the Canadian economy. By protecting businesses, property and lives, we are an integral part of the economic infrastructure of Canada” said Calgary Fire Chief Bruce Burrell.

“We regret that the federal government has opted not to deal with measures that CAFC has long been advancing to enhance the ability of the Fire Services to better serve and protect Canadian communities and the country as a whole, “ he added.

“CAFC accepts that priorities must be set while the current economic crisis is addressed. At the same time, we seek assurance from the Government that personal income tax relief for volunteer firefighters and increased funding under the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program will be dealt with in the near future,” Fire Chief Burrell said.

Ninety-one per cent of all Canadian communities are protected by Volunteer Fire Departments. The economic base of these towns and villages is mostly made up of small, family-owned businesses. The limited financial resources of these enterprises make them particularly vulnerable in the current economic downturn. Their decline or failure as a result of fire or other disaster would seriously erode municipal tax and employment bases. The Volunteer Fire Services are the first line of defence for these businesses and their municipalities.

The Fire Services are a major component of Canada’s public safety and security infrastructure. Enhanced funding of them by the federal government should be viewed as a meaningful investment in infrastructure building and support, Fire Chief Burrell emphasized.

### **Information**

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