

**POMAX Report on Consultation
Points of Clarification Highlighted by
Fire Services Review Project Steering Committee**

Funding			
#	Fire Services Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
1.	Fundraising	<p>Volunteer support for fundraising is declining due to other commitments, increasing time required for other department duties such as training, equipment maintenance and a reluctance to participate in fundraising activities</p> <p>Fire services are the only community service required to fundraise for equipment and operational needs Fire services are not the only community service required to fundraise for equipment and operational needs</p>	<p>Recruitment and retention of volunteers may suffer if fundraising is required and impact the number of volunteers available to respond to emergencies</p>
2.	<p>Reimbursement for delivering services are perceived as provincial responsibilities, (i.e., medical first responder, vehicle extrication, hazardous materials, hydro responses and standby, traffic control) These services are generally not a provincial responsibility but rather private or municipal.</p>	<p>Fire departments respond to these incidents but must fund training and equipment from within with no reimbursement from the province</p> <p>Volunteers are required to take on these extra responsibilities and related training</p> <p>Volunteers are not required to take on these extra responsibilities, they chose to do so</p>	<p>Local taxpayer is subsidizing provincial services with funds that may be required for community fire protection needs and circumstances</p> <p>The province does not provide any of these services, they are provided by fire services through registration with the municipality</p>

**POMAX Report on Consultation
Points of Clarification Highlighted by
Fire Services Review Project Steering Committee**

Funding			
#	Fire Services Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
3.	Provincial funding – a matching capital fund is available to fire services at two year intervals but it requires initial funding of equipment by the fire department which is then reimbursed by the province In actuality this funding is available at 3year intervals	<p>Fire departments in less affluent communities cannot afford the initial expense to purchase or replace equipment and apparatus</p> <p>Equipment may be kept in service long past its life expectancy</p>	<p>Apparatus may not be reliable to respond to emergencies. Possible delays in response or failure to operate at an emergency scene</p> <p>Fire fighters may use equipment (e.g. breathing apparatus) that should no longer be in service. A health and safety issue.</p>
4.	Area Rated Taxation Model (Taxes for some services [recreation, transportation, fire, etc.] may be calculated differently for the area that receives a specific or greatest benefit, rather than generally sharing the cost across the whole municipality.)	<p>Some communities are well funded while many do not have the tax base to provide resources adequate to meet the needs and circumstances of the community</p> <p>Some fire departments have to fund raise to provide basic operational needs such as fuel for the vehicles</p> <p>Communities with strong assessment base and high community involvement support their fire services</p> <p>Funding is determined by geographical boundaries (each ratepayer association coverage area) not by risk in a given community</p> <p>Fire departments may hold onto their boundaries regardless of impact on response times because they want the funding from that particular area</p>	<p>There is a risk that some communities are not able to provide a fire protection system appropriate to their needs and circumstances even within the same municipal jurisdiction Provision of the “best available” response times is superseded by local politics and funding interests</p>

**POMAX Report on Consultation
Points of Clarification Highlighted by
Fire Services Review Project Steering Committee**

Funding			
#	Fire Services Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
5.	Accountability for funding	<p>There is no mandated accountability mechanism regarding fire service funding</p> <p>Some fire departments are subject to strict and expensive auditing requirements while others are not required to provide any</p>	Uncertainty regarding how funds are spent and the impact on adequacy of community fire protection

Funding			
#	Municipal Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Municipal Governments	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
1.	Funding for fire services is done in silos per individual fire departments in a given municipal unit. Municipalities are required to collect funds as determined by the local ratepayers' association with no means to rationalize fire service funding within the municipal budgeting process.	<p>Elected representatives and municipal administrators have little control or authority over funds provided for fire protection.</p> <p>Municipal governments are not able to effect potential efficiencies over the broader municipal unit, i.e., fire department insurance coverage, rationalization of equipment and apparatus, provision of specialized services.</p>	<p>Fire safety concerns brought to elected municipal officials are not addressed</p> <p>The community may not receive the best possible fire protection with available funding.</p> <p>Best approach to fire safety in a community is not provided – i.e., fire prevention/public education as well as emergency response</p>
2.	Inequity of funding – funding of a fire department is often determined by the economic circumstances of individual rate payer areas within a municipal unit including such issues as property assessment values, financial demographics, perceived fire protection needs	<p>Fire departments that are well funded under the current system protect the status quo</p> <p>Fire departments that provide fire service in economically stressed areas are not funded to the level required to meet the needs and circumstances of that area</p> <p>Many municipalities are experiencing infrastructure deficits but are prevented from rationalizing the cost of fire services and</p>	Impact on purchasing of updated/reliable apparatus and equipment required for community and firefighter health and safety

Funding			
#	Municipal Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Municipal Governments	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
	and political influence of fire commissioners	equipment because fire departments continue to operate independently and in silos	
3.	Volunteer cost savings	Municipalities recognize the low cost of a volunteer fire service but are intimidated by the fear of resignations if they attempt to exert control over service levels or standards of service	Introduction of appropriate service levels and delivery standards are inhibited
4.	Reimbursement for delivering services deemed provincial responsibilities, (i.e., Medical First Responder, vehicle extrication, hazardous materials, hydro responses and standby, traffic control) These services are generally not a provincial responsibility but rather private or municipal.	EHS is a private business* but municipalities are subsidizing this enterprise through provision of emergency first responder services in their communities	Funding for local fire service needs are limited in order to fund provincial responsibilities

*EHS is actually contracted to the province and committed to province-wide service standards.

Service Delivery Standards			
#	Fire Service Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
1.	No province wide standardized training program/curriculum (most voluntarily follow NFPA 1000 series firefighter training)	Fire departments develop their own programs in isolation Member departments of mutual aid systems may have different levels of training Incident commanders cannot be confident in the abilities of members responding departments	Community members cannot assess the competency of their fire department members Health and safety concerns for firefighters and the public Registration of a fire department does not ensure the fire department can competently provide the services it is funded for or meet community expectations
2.	Insurance coverage for volunteers	Workplace insurance is not required to be provided in all municipalities Some communities provide insurance through the Workers Compensation Board while others	Reluctance to become a volunteer firefighter depending on availability and type insurance coverage

Service Delivery Standards			
#	Fire Service Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
		rely on private insurance such as Volunteer Firefighters Insurance Service (VFIS) Some communities do not provide insurance of any kind to volunteers	Hiring and retention of volunteers impacts response capabilities
3.	Development of standards	Development of standards should have input from the fire service practitioners	Ensures realistic and practical standards to be employed in communities Ensures communities are getting the services they are funding
4.	If service delivery standards are developed they need to be flexible to meet local community needs and circumstances	Requires fire departments to clearly define and identify their capabilities to the community	Enables a community to understand, define and fund the level of services appropriate to the needs and circumstances of that community
5.	Without standards fire departments and members are subject to potential legal liabilities	Without approved service delivery standards fire potential liabilities are increased In the absence of local standards fire departments will be subject to scrutiny against industry wide standards	Potential impact on hiring and retention of volunteers
6.	Enforcement of standards - there is no provincial body to enforce standards if they are developed	Adoption of standards would be voluntary in each fire department	Community may not have the level of protection they assume or expect

Service Delivery Standards			
#	Municipal Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Municipal Governments	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
1.	Knowledge and understanding of standards – service delivery and performance	Many municipal representatives do not have a clear understanding of what service delivery and performance standards are regarding the fire service and what the impact would be on their municipalities and the fire services Lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of fire service standards results in a fear of	Best practices/delivery standards that benefit community fire safety are not implemented

Service Delivery Standards			
#	Municipal Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Municipal Governments	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
		<p>implementing standards as financial concern and the potential to lose volunteers</p> <p>If the province unilaterally introduces standards for the fire service, there may be significant impacts to municipalities</p> <p>The fire services in Nova Scotia are dependent on volunteers and if onerous standards are introduced then volunteers may decide to leave the fire service and recruiting new volunteers may become difficult</p>	
2.	<p>No provincial guidance/direction standards for fire service operations</p> <p>There are provisions within the MGA that provide opportunity for municipalities to provide guidance and direction for fire services (MGA Section 296)</p>	<p>There is a range of fire service delivery and performance standards across the province depending on the understanding/interest of the local fire service provider, the rate payer association members and the municipal unit</p> <p>Municipal councilors have no means to measure what they are funding and what they are receiving regarding the provision of fire services from the independently operated fire departments</p> <p>In the absence of provincially recognized standards the default position in legal actions become general fire industry standards such as NFPA for training and deployment</p> <p>Municipalities do have the means to measure what they are funding and what they are receiving for services through the MGA section 296</p>	<p>Coordination of response, incident command and equipment resources during mutual aid activations are affected</p> <p>The MGA Section 302 has provisions for Mutual Aid and Section 296 has provisions for implementation of services</p>

Organization Structure/Governance			
#	Fire Service Perspective	What we heard about the impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
1.	<p>The <i>Municipal Governance Act</i> states that a municipality <u>may</u> provide fire services - there is no requirement to do so</p> <p><i>Municipal Government Act</i> states “A municipality may maintain and provide fire and emergency services by providing the service, assisting others to provide the service, working with others to provide the service or a combination or means”, 1998, c. 18, s.293</p> <p>Section 294 and 295 also have provisions where there are no fire services and they are offered by a service provider the municipality shall register them.</p>	<p>Fire departments operate independently with little or no provincial or local government oversight</p> <p>Local municipal governments can divest themselves of responsibility for fire protection by registering a fire department to provide service</p> <p>There is no system of responsibility or accountability from the province through the municipal jurisdiction to the individual fire departments</p> <p>The province has through legislation (MGA Section 296) enabled the municipalities to have oversight of fire and emergency services</p>	<p>Community members may or may not receive or understand the fire protection they expect vs. actual service level being provided</p> <p>Over expectation of emergency response capabilities may result in failure to take personal responsibility for fire safety</p>
2.	<p>There is no designated provincial position/agency responsible for fire service operational matters</p>	<p>Local fire departments deal in isolation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer recruitment and retention • Assistance with mutual aid administrative and operational matters <p>No advocacy for fire service operational matters at the provincial level</p> <p>No enforcement of provincial mandates such as municipal addressing</p> <p>No direction for fire service standards or service levels so fire departments develop their own standards in isolation</p>	<p>Long term viability of the volunteer fire service in jeopardy and no affordable alternative</p> <p>Mutual aid systems may not adequately address the fire protection requirements in a community</p> <p>Fire service matters that would enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of local fire services are not understood or acted upon by the provincial government</p> <p>Citizens may receive less than expected fire protection</p>

Organization Structure/Governance			
#	Fire Service Perspective	What we heard about the impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
		<p>A common/consistent point of contact within the provincial government would assist the predominately volunteer fire service representatives in efforts to bring fire service matters to the province</p> <p>The province has assisted and provided fire services with recruitment and retention models that can be utilized.</p> <p>There is an advocacy group that has been provided through the Fire Safety Act and Regulations (Nova Scotia Fire Services Advisory Committee) that has a mandate to advise government on fire service issues.</p> <p>At present fire services do have a common point of contact (Fire Services Association of Nova Scotia) who have direct access to the Nova Scotia Fire Service Advisory Committee and or Council.</p>	<p>Without consistent or recognized standards community members do not know what level/quality of service they are receiving</p>
3.	Fire departments operate in silos within municipal units	<p>Each fire department is required to organize itself as an incorporated non-profit organization and develop/organize its own governance model, policies, funding, equipment, staffing</p> <p>Fire departments purchase equipment and provide services based on their immediate needs and agendas</p> <p>Duplication/overlapping of resources (equipment, staffing, station, service provision) within a municipal jurisdiction and/or geographical area</p>	<p>The closest fire station(s) may not respond to emergency calls impacting response times and number of responders</p> <p>Failure to rationalize resources over a broader geographical area may result in inadequate funding of other fire protection components such as fire prevention and public education</p> <p>Fire protection is not delivered efficiently and effectively in many communities in close proximity to each other</p>

Organization Structure/Governance			
#	Fire Service Perspective	What we heard about the impact on Fire Services	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
		<p>Fire chiefs are elected by their associations. The introduction of fire system standards by fire service managers is impeded by the political nature of their positions</p> <p>Fire departments and their boards are responsible only to the local ratepayers' association</p> <p>There are provisions in the MGA Section 296 that permits municipalities to assist fire services in the development, governance, policy and funding models</p>	<p>Fire protection in a given jurisdiction may not meet the actual needs and circumstances of the community</p>

Organizational Structure/Governance			
#	Municipal Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Municipal Governments	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
1.	<p>The <i>Municipal Government Act</i> states that a municipality may provide fire services - there is no requirement to do so</p> <p>The <i>Municipal Government Act</i> states "A municipality may maintain and provide fire and emergency services by providing the service, assisting others to provide the service, working with others to provide the service or a combination or means, 1998, c. 18, s.293</p> <p>Section 294 and 295 also have provisions where there are no fire services and they are offered</p>	<p>There is no direction from the province to assist municipal governments in the delivery of fire services in their communities including organizational model, level of services, funding. Municipalities rely on local fire departments to register to provide services resulting in a variety of service types and levels of service within the municipal structure.</p> <p>The province has provided legislation Section 296 to allow municipalities to assist fire services in the delivery of fire services.</p>	<p>Community members may not get the services they expect or assume they have.</p> <p>Communities may not get the level of service adequate or appropriate to the needs and circumstances of that area.</p>

	Organizational Structure/Governance		
#	Municipal Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Municipal Governments	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
	by a service provider the municipality shall register them.		
2.	There is no designated provincial position/agency responsible for fire service operational matters	<p>Elected officials and municipal managers have no direct access point to the provincial government to deal with fire service operational matters</p> <p>There is an advocacy group that has been provided through the Fire Safety Act and Regulations (Nova Scotia Fire Services Advisory Committee) that has a mandate to advise government on fire service issues.</p>	Fire safety concerns and initiatives that would benefit community fire safety are not acted upon or implemented
3.	Fire commissioner role, authority and independence	<p>Fire commissioners have wide ranging authority and can operate independently of any municipal oversight in the administration and operation of the fire department, yet municipally elected officials and senior managers are held accountable by the taxpayer for fire service administration and delivery</p> <p>Fire commissioners have the authority to provide fire services beyond the municipality with which they are registered and this could result in one municipality subsidizing fire services in another municipality</p> <p>Fire Commissioners/Fire Marshals do not have wide ranging authority and are limited to the authority provided to them in legislation which at present provides them with no administrative or operational authority of fire departments.</p>	Lack of municipal oversight could result in inadequate fire protection
4.	Transparency and Accountability – municipalities purchase fire	Elected officials are held accountable by the community for fire services but have no	Fire safety concerns brought to elected municipal officials are not addressed

	Organizational Structure/Governance		
#	Municipal Perspective	What we heard about the Impact on Municipal Governments	What we heard about the Impact on Public Safety
	services through the registration of a fire service provider with little influence on fire department administration, operations or quality of service	<p>authority over fire department administration, operations or quality of service</p> <p>While municipal governments have little control over fire departments they are subject to potential legal liabilities regarding fire protection matters</p> <p>There are provisions within the MGA Section 296 that permits municipalities to oversight of fire services through policy implementation</p>	
5.	Fire departments operate in silos within a municipal unit	<p>Municipalities are not able to implement service levels, performance standards, or training standards in a meaningful way</p> <p>Municipalities are not able to avoid unnecessary duplication of equipment in adjacent fire departments</p> <p>Municipalities are not able to develop shared specialized services in the individual fire department within the municipal unit or between adjacent municipalities.</p> <p>Municipalities have no opportunities to share best practices</p> <p>Initiatives to conduct community wide risk assessments or develop master fire plans on a broad community basis are inhibited by localized special interest groups/fire departments</p> <p>There are provisions within the MGA Section 296 that permits municipalities to oversight of fire services through policy implementation</p>	<p>Fire safety is not delivered at the optimal level for that community</p> <p>Communities may not have access to specialized services required by the community</p>