

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the
2019 Budget

By: International Association of Fire Fighters

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- **Recommendation:** That the government renew its partnership program with the International Association of Fire Fighters by providing a funding contribution in the amount of \$500,000 per year for the next five years for the IAFF's Canadian Haz-Mat and CBRNE Training Initiative program.

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), which represents over 25,400 full-time, professional fire fighters and emergency medical responders in Canada, urges the Finance Committee to consider public safety when determining ways to ensure Canada's competitiveness to help grow our economy.

A multi-faceted strategy is needed to foster competitiveness. Investment to stimulate economic growth in key sectors such as mining and forest, agri-food, renewable energy and manufacturing require a balanced investment in public safety.

In today's climate where international trade is evolving, the potential for domestic trade would result in more infrastructure and more raw materials to be processed and transported across the country.

Moreover, emerging sectors such as cannabis require modifications in emergency response. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which creates and maintains private, copyrighted standards and codes for usage and adoption by local governments in the United States, has identified hazards such as high electrical loads, CO₂ extraction, flammable and potentially explosive substances used in the THC extraction process in commercial cannabis production.

Communities across Canada must be prepared to safely and effectively respond to the risks and potential hazards that come with growth in these sectors.

The federal government can build on an existing partnership with the IAFF to continue to invest in the IAFF's Canadian Haz-Mat and CBRNE Training Initiative. This program provides an internationally-accredited level of hazardous materials and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) response training to first responders across Canada in an extremely cost-effective manner.

Announced in 2007, the program provides a contribution of up to \$500,000 annually to provide first responders with real-world training in hazardous materials responses that few institutions can match; delivered in a first responder's own community by IAFF members who are certified instructors and certified Haz-Mat responders.

The IAFF curriculum follows NFPA 472, Standard for Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Incidents, and complements existing Government of Canada training initiatives.

Since training classes began in early 2009, over 5,400 professional and volunteer fire fighters, police officers, paramedics, and other first responders have been taught how to respond safely and effectively to Haz-Mat and CBRNE incidents. Training has also been provided to federal workers including military personnel, search & rescue crews and RCMP. Parks Canada personnel in British Columbia received training through the program to help them deal with debris from the Tsunami that resulted from the devastating earthquake in Japan in 2011.

The training is offered free to municipalities thanks to the existing Government of Canada funding contribution.

The IAFF Haz-Mat & CBRNE training program delivers a recognized level of training in an extremely cost-effective manner, reflecting the efficiency of sending two instructors into a municipality to deliver the training to a typical class size of 25 first responders versus the travel costs of sending all of the students to a centralized location for training.

This model allows the training to reach smaller communities that could not otherwise afford to send first responders to a centralized location for training and that could not risk sending its personnel out of the community. With industrial, agricultural and institutional facilities, small communities are not immune to the risk of Haz-Mat and CBRNE incidents and their personnel are in no less need of the appropriate response training.

Emergencies such as train derailments may involve multiple jurisdictions, and the program promotes better interoperability between first responders, and can improve the way communities deal with dangerous incidents.

Unlike most other Haz-Mat and CBRNE training programs that are available, the IAFF program can be customized to reflect the specific hazards that exist in each community where training courses are delivered. Because the training is made available at no cost to municipalities, the program allows the government of Canada to demonstrate its commitment to public safety by actively supporting initiatives that protect them from the most dangerous kinds of emergency situations.

Without an ongoing commitment from the Government of Canada, the program will sunset in March, 2019. The fact that over 5,400 first responders are now trained to respond safely and effectively to Haz-Mat and CBRNE incidents across Canada is proof of its success. But there is still significant potential to expand the training into regions where there remains a lack of Haz-Mat and CBRNE response training, which is why the IAFF is asking the Government of Canada to extend funding for the program for an additional five years.

The issue of competitiveness and economic growth cannot be solved without a considering a multi-faceted strategy. It would require the investment in many areas, including trade, education and support for key sectors such as renewable energy. The need to balance this investment with public safety programs such as the IAFF's Haz-Mat and CBRNE Training Initiative is necessary to help protect Canada's population and infrastructure.

For a safe and resilient Canada.