



***International Association of Fire Fighters
AFL-CIO, CLC***

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of the 2021 Federal Budget**

August 7, 2020

Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government continue to invest in our municipalities by supporting future consideration of financial relief as a top-up to the Safe Restart Agreement, providing emergency operating funding to municipalities to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and allow them to maintain vital services, including fire and emergency medical services.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the federal government include guidance within the evaluation of pandemic-resilient infrastructure projects to ensure that proper public safety measures, including proper staffing and skills training to meet the unique needs of each community project.

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) represents more than 26,000 frontline emergency responders in Canada; men and women who serve their communities in municipal fire departments as professional fire fighters and as emergency medical responders, including paramedics.

During this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, our members on the front lines remain dedicated to protecting their fellow citizens and their property while adapting to heightened levels of exposure. Concerns of declining supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE), prioritized testing and mental health resources that are critical for safe response are top of mind for our members.

Adapting to this new normal with constantly-evolving health and safety protocols remains the highest priority, as even a small number of fire fighters in quarantine may impede frontline response capabilities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, governments at all levels have been working hard to protect the health and safety of Canadians, and to address the economic impacts of this unprecedented emergency. The IAFF recognizes and appreciates the many measures that governments have already undertaken in response to the pandemic.

Municipalities across Canada are particularly impacted, having experienced major revenue shortfalls while still having the exceptional challenge of meeting financial obligations and trying to maintain a range of services that Canadians depend on every day, including essential public safety services such as fire protection and emergency medical services.

The IAFF commends the federal government's investment of over \$19 billion through the Safe Restart Agreement, which includes funding for municipalities' operational costs.

Despite this investment, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities cautioned that some municipalities will still be facing difficult choices about the services Canadians rely on.¹

In the short term and in the long term, it is important to ensure that Canadian municipalities have the financial resources they need to maintain essential services. It is also important to the nation's economy that the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who deliver those services keep working.

The IAFF recommends that the federal government continue to invest in municipalities by supporting future consideration of financial relief as a top-up to the Safe Restart Agreement, providing emergency operating funding to municipalities to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and allow them to maintain vital services, including fire and emergency medical services.

The IAFF also recognizes the recent federal investment of a new COVID-19 Resilience Funding stream within the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program to develop pandemic-resilient infrastructure projects to create more sustainable communities.

Fostering sustainable infrastructure requires a balanced investment in public safety. As such, the IAFF recommends that the federal government include guidance within the evaluation of pandemic-resilient infrastructure projects to ensure that proper public safety measures, including proper staffing and skills training to meet the unique needs of each community project.

An economically secure city is best positioned to protect the safety of its citizens and to continue delivering the services they need and use every day.

The IAFF welcomes the opportunity to appear before the Finance Committee to discuss the aforementioned recommendations in further detail. For more information, please contact Scott Marks, IAFF Assistant to the General President for Canadian Operations at smarks@iaff.org.