



OPFFA

ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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OPFFA POSTING #19-062
April 11, 2019

Post-Seminar OPFFA Legislative Update **Executive Vice President, Mark Train**

As a follow-up to our highly successful joint Health and Safety Labour Education Seminar I wanted to share this brief legislative update with members on how the OPFFA is currently positioned on issues and where we are moving to muster our political strength.

First, I want to thank all those who attended the seminar. I support the move to join our two OPFFA events, providing a platform to cross-educate our health and safety reps to the realities and scope of labour/management/government issues, reinforcing how worker reps on health and safety committees must support Local leaders and represent union positions in their respective health and safety roles. Fire management ALWAYS pushes the employer agenda (which often is to stall and drag out every issue) we ALL need to be on side and push back appropriately to ensure the safety of our members. I encourage everyone who attended to continue the relationships and networking established at the seminar!

I last provided an update at the beginning of February, which can be reviewed by Local Leaders on the OPFFA data base in case you missed it. Since that time, we have been quite active at Queens Park although it continues to be a challenge to engage in direct and meaningful conversation with members of government. We continue to strive to establish these relationships and I invite any OPFFA member, with a relationship with their government (PC) MPP to have them reach out to me to discuss issues important to professional fire fighters in Ontario. We are fully committed to establish working relationships within the PC Caucus at Queen's Park.

Highlights since the last update

Budget Submissions and Provincial Budget:

Two budget submissions were formally filed by the OPFFA to the government for their consideration. The first was to expand Simultaneous Notification province wide, and the second was to focus on cancer reduction by legislating/regulating cancer prevention

protocols. These submissions were discussed at the Labour Seminar and the submission documents are available for Local Executive Boards to review.

As I do my final edit on this Legislative Report, the budget was just announced. Upon quick analysis of the budget speech and the nearly 400-page budget document there appears to be no dramatically new changes for professional fire fighters that we have not already seen or are not already coming. We will provide a more detailed report on the budget and minor changes to fine structures in the FPPA and small budget increases to the Ministry (Now Ministry of the Solicitor General – Formerly Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services in future reports.

Simultaneous Notification

Following up on the budget submissions, we reached out to 5 ministers to engage in discussions on the Simultaneous Notification file. No ministers replied on the matter however we have met with various Fire Department Chiefs and Communication Supervisors, and the Senior Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS – now renamed Ministry of the Solicitor General) on the matter. Initially the government position was that it is entirely a Ministry of Health matter, however after discussion it was evident that this reaches into several other ministries, namely MCSCS and Municipal Affairs, it is also important that we keep it on the radar of Premier’s Office staff. What the results showed is that when we have an audience it is not difficult to convince them that our position is sound and reasonably practicable, our challenge however, is to get our message to this government that seems to have an agenda and is blocking us out of it on nearly every level.

Continuing with a non-partisan approach, building on existing relationships, we met with MPP France Gélinas (NDP) and were proud to support her private members bill “9-1-1 Everywhere in Ontario” that received first reading on March 5. The Bill seeks to make 9-1-1 available province wide, and to add safety and system improvements to the 9-1-1 system that includes Simultaneous Notification. We encourage you to view the press release that can be found on the OntarioFireFighters.Org website. We continue to advocate for this bill either in its entirety or for important components of it, should it not pass.

All locals should continually be advocating for Simultaneous Notification or a technological link between their local CACC Centre and fire dispatch. Settling for a computer screen or “Fire Viewer” as a replacement for the bi-directional computer link is NOT an adequate replacement. Speak up against it! Encourage your fire chiefs to network with their peers who are seeing successes in moving this forward with us.

Regional Government Review

We have contacted our ministry and the Premier's Office to meet and discuss the scope of their direction on Regional Government Review. We will expand the request for meetings to more ministries and individuals as we have been shut out of many of the current requests. In developing our approach to any regionalization, affected locals were asked to participate in a broad survey to determine where they felt there were opportunities and threats under various amalgamation scenarios. On review, many locals have the same concerns, however each region may be re-defined in a different fashion. We are trying to ascertain whether government will re-draw boundaries, define the division of services, amalgamate pieces of regions or anything else that could be in play.

This was discussed at the recent seminar and we will continue to collaborate with DVP Fred LeBlanc from the IAFF, our local leaderships and local government leaders. Together we can best prepare for any level of forced amalgamations that we will face. Currently we anticipate that the PC Government will unveil their plans in late summer, and likely at the AMO (Association of Municipalities of Ontario) conference in August. The OPFFA will have representatives in attendance at this event.

Interest Arbitration

We are aware of a few locals who are potentially nearing impasse in collective bargaining. At this time the OPFFA and advocates will monitor needs and events as the first locals navigate the new interest arbitration process. We urge any local nearing impasse to be in contact with their District Vice President and potentially hold on entering the arbitration process, allowing for discussion, consideration and advice from others as collectively we navigate the new system.

OPFFA Action Hub

The OPFFA public website, www.OntarioFireFighters.Org is now sporting a new look and a greatly enhanced capacity to engage the public, communities and our members. You will see a new and aggressive approach to driving members and the public to our site with calls to action and interesting relevant content.

We will commence more targeted campaigns based geographically and on common fire issues to grow our following on all our social media platforms. Specifically, some of our next campaigns will be directed at high rise communities and high rise residents. We will engage them with safety messages and grow their interest in the importance of proper fire department response for their safety. If you have suggestions for any campaign content or participation, please don't hesitate to call or email me.

The provincial government is running on very consistent messaging that serves to attempt to elevate them at every opportunity regardless of the subject. Watch and learn. This is very effective and we need to always frame our messages to our advantage in a similar fashion.

Please feel free to reach out to me any time with your questions, suggestions or observations.

I encourage locals and members to be engaged in the legislative side of your career as professional fire fighters and in the various support roles. Everything we do is driven by legislation or a politically minded decision maker. We will continue to advocate for and communicate with you on items that affect our careers, safety, salary and benefits.

In solidarity,

Mark


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