

# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS



# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND SENATORS

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**33<sup>RD</sup> CANADIAN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE**  
APRIL 19 - 21, 2026 • OTTAWA, ONTARIO



# FROM THE GENERAL PRESIDENT

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DEAR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT OR SENATOR,

On behalf of more than 30,000 Canadian members of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), I am pleased to present our 2026 Legislative Priorities Book. It outlines key federal policy issues that directly affect the nation's professional fire fighters and paramedics.

Our members are on duty around the clock in more than 200 cities and towns. When Canadians need help, IAFF members are the nation's first line of defense – whether the call is a fire, a medical emergency or a natural disaster.

The decisions you make in Parliament determine how effectively the nation's fire fighters and paramedics can do their jobs. From April 19 to 21, 2026, IAFF members from across Canada will be in Ottawa to meet with MPs and Senators from all parties to garner support for the priorities outlined in this book.

I encourage you to connect with IAFF members from your community, hear their perspectives and discuss how you can help advance these priorities.

Together, we can ensure Canada's fire fighters and paramedics have the support and resources needed to do their jobs safely while protecting the public.

Sincerely,



Edward A. Kelly  
General President



# CHARGED FOR SAFETY: PROTECTING FIRE FIGHTERS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE FROM LITHIUM-ION BATTERY FIRES

**L**ithium-ion batteries (LIBs) are key to Canada's energy transition but pose a rapidly growing fire hazard that outpaces current research, regulations, and fire fighter protections.

The widespread use of lithium-ion batteries in consumer electronics, e-bikes, e-scooters, and energy storage systems has driven a sharp rise in fires and explosions.

Mostly imported and largely unregulated, these batteries and their charging systems increase risk to both public safety and first responders. Canada lacks a comprehensive and complete national database of LIB incidents to inform stakeholders and decision-makers.

## KEY FACTS

- Lithium-ion battery fires are not ordinary fires. When a cell enters thermal runaway, it **generates intense heat that can exceed 700°C** and releases toxic gases including hydrogen fluoride, heavy metals, carbon monoxide and projectile debris.
- Standard firefighting water and foam are often insufficient to fully extinguish these fires and prevent re-ignition.
- Contaminated fire fighter protective equipment must undergo full decontamination to ensure personnel safety – an expensive and time-consuming process.
- Since 2016, Vancouver Fire Rescue Services has experienced a **500% increase** in battery fires.
- Between 2020 and 2024, Toronto Fire Services recorded a **591% surge**, while Montreal's Fire Service reported a 195% increase since 2022.
- The **flashover time of lithium-ion battery fires is under one minute** – compared to 3-5 minutes for conventional residential fires (NFPA/FDNY joint testing, 2022). **Re-ignition** can occur hours or even days after initial suppression.

## THE ISSUE

Canada currently lacks a coordinated, national system for mandatory reporting of all lithium-ion battery incidents, leaving critical gaps:

- Fire fighter exposure risks cannot be quantified or addressed through occupational health standards.
- Training and response protocols cannot be evidence-based or standardized nationwide.
- Links between product failures, charging practices, and fatalities cannot be established.
- Vulnerable populations – including single-room occupancy residents and delivery workers – remain invisible in the data.

Lithium-ion batteries are **not certified to a single, unified mandatory safety standard in Canada** such as Underwriter's Laboratories or Canadian Standards Association.

## OUR ASK

The IAFF calls on the Government of Canada to:

- Establish a National Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Fighter Safety Initiative.
- Mandate a national database to track all lithium-ion battery fire incidents.
- Fund research on fire fighter exposures and health risks.
- Standardize training and response protocols nationwide.
- Update building and product safety codes.
- Invest in protective equipment and emerging suppression technologies.

Lithium-ion battery fires are increasing rapidly. Safety standards and protections must keep pace.

# SUSTAINING SUPPORT: INDEXING THE MEMORIAL GRANT PROGRAM FOR FALLEN FIREFIGHTER FAMILIES - A MATTER OF FAIRNESS

In 2018, the Government of Canada established a national line-of-duty death benefit for the families of fire fighters, paramedics and other public safety personnel who make the ultimate sacrifice while protecting their fellow Canadians.

The Memorial Grant Program for First Responders (MGP) provides a tax-free \$300,000 one-time grant to the surviving family in recognition of their loved one's service and sacrifice.

## KEY FACTS

- The Memorial Grant Program amount has remained at \$300,000 since 2018, creating a gap in its intended level of family support due to increases in the cost of living.
- Inflation has increased approximately 25% since 2018 according to Statistics Canada.
- MGP grants are made to an average of 143 surviving families annually.
- Many federal benefits – including OAS/CPP, veterans' benefits and pensions and other social programs – are indexed to inflation.
- A similar benefit in the U.S., the Public Safety Officers Benefit, is indexed to inflation.

## THE ISSUE

Since the MGP was established in 2018, the actual value of the benefit is now 25% less than its intended level of support and will continue to decrease year after year if not indexed.

This means the MGP grant now provides surviving families substantially less to cover housing, education, childcare, and other living costs, than it did when the program was established.

## THE SOLUTION

Increase the grant amount by 25% to \$375,000 to reflect the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases since 2018, and index the amount annually moving forward to match the CPI as reported by Statistics Canada.

## OUR ASK

The IAFF calls on the Government of Canada to:

- Increase the Memorial Grant Program to \$375,000 to account for inflation since 2018.
- Index the benefit annually to the Consumer Price Index moving forward.

Surviving families should not see the value of this benefit erode over time. This is a matter of fairness.

# STRENGTHENING CANADA'S AIRPORT FIREFIGHTING REGULATIONS

**M**ost major Canadian airports fall short of international safety standards for airport rescue and firefighting, which specify rescue as a required and resourced function of airport fire fighters, establish minimum personnel requirements and specify response times for all areas of all operational runways.

Under the **Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs) Part 303**, there is no mandate for airports to provide an adequate number of fire fighters to conduct passenger rescue inside a burning aircraft, and response time requirements lag behind globally recognized benchmarks. These gaps have a direct impact on the safety of the flying public.

## KEY FACTS

- When an aircraft accident occurs, conditions inside the fuselage can become lethal within minutes due to fire, smoke, and toxic gases.
- The CARs **do not align** with internationally recognized International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards for airport rescue and firefighting.
- The CARs do **not** list rescue as a required function for airport firefighters.
- The CARs require fire fighters to reach only the **midpoint** of the furthest runway within three minutes, not the endpoint as specified under ICAO.
- The CARs mandate firefighting vehicles and extinguishing agents but fail to specify minimum personnel levels needed to conduct rescue operations.
- Response time requirements are **below international aviation safety standards**.
- Most airports rely on **municipal** firefighters as backup, who may lack specialized training and can take **10 minutes** or more to arrive. This reliance also risks making those municipal resources unavailable in the event of a residential structure fire or other emergency.

## THE ISSUE

Without a sufficient number of on-site firefighters trained, equipped and mandated for aircraft rescue, passengers may not receive immediate life-saving assistance and are left to self-rescue.

**International standards are clear.** The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) requires airport firefighting services to:

- Reach **all points on runways within three minutes**, and
- Perform **passenger rescue** as a core operational function.

These standards are also reflected in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 403 for Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting. NFPA standards are used across North America as the baseline for safe and effective fire responses.

Under the Chicago Convention, Canada must report any differences between its regulations and ICAO standards under **Article 38**, yet there is **no clear public reporting** on differences related to airport firefighting regulations.

**Momentum for change already exists.** In September 2023, Parliament adopted M-96, calling on the federal government to bring Canadian regulations into alignment with ICAO standards. Since then, there have been consultations but no action. The consensus is clear that changes need to be made now.

## OUR ASK

The IAFF calls on the **Minister of Transport** to immediately align CAR 303 with ICAO standards by:

- **Making passenger rescue a required function** of airport firefighters.
- **Requiring an adequate number of personnel** to perform rescues and to reach the endpoint of all operational runways within three minutes.
- **Publicly reporting differences** between Canadian regulations and ICAO standards as required under Article 38.

Public safety must come first. **A \$1–\$2 passenger safety fee per ticket** could help airports meet these standards without placing additional pressure on municipal fire departments.

# ABOUT THE IAFF

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) is North America's labour union for professional fire fighters, paramedics and rescue workers, representing more than 365,000 full-time members across Canada and the United States since 1918.

In Canada, the IAFF represents more than 30,000 members in over 200 communities, with affiliates in every province and territory. It is the national voice for Canada's professional fire fighters.

The union advocates at all levels of government for safer working conditions, stronger protections for fire fighter health – including occupational cancer and behavioural health – and better pay, benefits and retirement security.

The IAFF delivers programs, training and advocacy that support Canadian members and strengthen the fire service. These include the Responding to the Interface (RTI) wildland training, the Canadian Haz-Mat and CBRNE Training Initiative, the Canadian Legislative Conference, the Biennial Canadian Policy Conference and the Canadian Political Training Academy.

The IAFF provides services in English and French, and supports Canadian affiliates with collective bargaining research, government affairs, media and public relations and health and safety information.

