
Assembly of First Nations

55 Metcalfe Street, Suite 1600
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L5
Telephone: 613-241-6789 Fax: 613-241-5808
www.afn.ca



Assemblée des Premières Nations

55, rue Metcalfe, Suite 1600
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 6L5
Téléphone: 613-241-6789 Télécopieur: 613-241-5808
www.afn.ca

**Annual General Assembly
July 5, 6, 7, 2022, Vancouver, BC**

Resolution no. 09/2022

TITLE: Targeted Support to Improve First Nations Fire Protection

SUBJECT: Infrastructure, Emergency Services

MOVED BY: Chief Delores Kakegamic, Sandy Lake First Nation, ON

SECONDED BY: Ogimaa Kwe Linda Debassige, M'Chigeeng First Nation, ON

DECISION Approved by the AFN Executive Committee by consensus.

WHEREAS:

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:
- i. Article 21 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in areas of education, employment, vocational training, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
 - ii. Article 29 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programs for Indigenous Peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.
- B. First Nations continue to be at a greater risk of experiencing fatal fires, due to continued insufficient funding and fewer fire protection services. In some First Nations across the country, there are no fire services available to respond to a fire.
- C. For years First Nations Chiefs and community members from across the country have been calling for adequate funding and fire protection services to protect their First Nations from the growing threat of fatal fires.

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- D. In 2021, the Ontario Coroner's Table on Understanding Fire Deaths in First Nations released a review that examined fire deaths in First Nations communities in Ontario over a ten-year period from 2008 to 2017. The review identified 56 deaths in 29 fires that occurred in 20 First Nations across Ontario.
- E. The First Nations Advisory Group of the Review raised several issues and concerns about housing structures and funding, which require further consideration and action to prevent fire fatalities, including funding for housing, allocation of funds to meet First Nations community needs, the role of fire and building codes, status of structure maintenance, and jurisdictional issues and responsibilities.
- F. Between 2008-2017, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) provided only \$29 million annually for fire protection services to be dispersed amongst 634 First Nations. Budget 2022 announced \$39.2 million over five years to ISC to support the purchase of firefighting equipment by First Nations, which continues to remain insufficient to address First Nation fire protection issues.
- G. The lack of access to fire protection services and inadequate community infrastructure that First Nations have been exposed to for decades has left many First Nations systematically more at risk to fire fatalities, without the required resources necessary to respond to a fire.
- H. With increasing numbers of forest fires across Canada due to climate change, some First Nations do not have access to the modern resources needed to address fire incidents at the wildland urban interface.
- I. With the completion of the Joint First Nations Fire Protection Strategy (2016-2021), the Assembly of First Nations has commenced work on a new First Nations Fire Protection Strategy with immediate goals to improve fire protection for First Nations with work supported by a National Working Group of First Nations Fire Chiefs located across Canada.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to seek funding and resources to support a National First Responders Gathering to help identify priorities in addressing and improving fire protection for First Nations and informed by the new First Nation Fire Protection Strategy goals.
2. Direct the AFN to urge the federal government to immediately invest in firefighting equipment to improve First Nations fire departments to respond to capacity issues, climate change-related weather events, and fire incidents at the wildland urban interface.

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3. Direct the AFN to advocate to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) for targeted, comparable and sustainable funding for First Nations-led fire protection services to support First Nation fire departments, including fully remunerated First Nation fire department positions so First Nations can better respond to their fire incidents.
4. Direct the AFN to urge the federal government to make long-term and sustainable funding commitments towards First Nations community infrastructure to improve First Nation fire department accessibility, such as critical road infrastructure and access to water services.
5. Direct the AFN to advocate to ISC for immediate targeted funding supports to First Nations who are under current evacuation orders and to establish an expedited emergency relief fund for First Nations to access in the event of future evacuation orders caused by extreme weather events.

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