



Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Large Urban Committee Meeting Minutes

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs mission is to lead innovation and excellence in public and life safety. Our vision is to inspire and influence a safer Ontario.

DEI vision: That every fire department in Ontario is equitable, inclusive, and reflects the diversity of the community they serve.

Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94169100811?pwd=MmZJM3NITTIVNTJ2MC9aVmtCY2t4dz09>

Meeting ID: 941 6910 0811, Passcode: 612045

Tuesday, October 12, 2021, 2pm

Attendees: Mark MacDonald, Paul Hutt, Bryan Burbidge, Bill Boyes, Bob Gilmore, Stephen Laforet, Dave Cunliffe, Lori Hammer, Deryn Rizzi, Paul Boissonneault, Adam Grant, Jim Jessop, Andy Zvanitajs, Michelle O'Hara

Invited guest: Sean Reginio, Hicks Morley

Regrets: None

Minute Taker: Mark Tishman

1. Welcome – Committee Chair

- The Chair welcomed everyone and gave a special welcome to Bryan and Andy for becoming the newest members of the committee.
- Bill Boyes thanked Michelle O'Hara for everything she has done for OAFC and wished her well in her next position.

2. Additions to the Agenda

- Issue with people trying to get leave on WSIB prior to vaccine policy.
- Oakville request information OT and drawing out sick leave.

3. Declarations of Conflict of Interests

- None

4. Approval of April 13, 2021 and June 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Moved by: Paul Hutt

Seconded by: Dave Cunliffe

Approved



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5. Council Directed Diversification Hiring Practices Discussion

- Sean Reginio of Hicks Morley introduced himself to the committee and talked about the planned webinar and if anyone had any success or failures to discuss.
- One member noted that they have a very diverse community, but at every recruitment class, we wind up with a predominantly homogeneous group of people and were getting pressure to diversify and reform. We are committed to DEI, but how and how fast doesn't appear good enough.
- Another department similar to the previous noted that they're getting pressure from elected officials with reference to targeted hiring and specific demographics until ratios are balanced or met. We are making some progress but not fast enough. We have 20 outreach workers.
- Our challenge is not we're not getting the applicants. Forgetting any background or training, if we hired every DEI candidate, we still wouldn't have the numbers.
- Another department has been under pressure on this for years. We are trying to get out to communities, but we don't get people applying. We hear from them that they don't see themselves as firefighters which is a big challenge. Unless we get the leaders of those communities on board, the message falls on deaf ears. Timeframe is also a bit of an issue. Everyone wants it done immediately, but it might actually be a generational issue. The city is developing its own strategy since we don't have the resources to do all that outreach on our own.
- Hicks Morley – Section 14 of the Human Rights Code could be considered and some outreach strategy versus resources.
- One departments challenge is the political pressure plus internal pressure. We don't want to affect moral by just filling a quota, but filling with real people and positions, not hiring based on something to just tick the box. We can't come across this way or it will fail. We also need to make sure we set these people up for success. Many of the communities of interest suffer from poverty and obtaining the training is unaffordable, so maybe we should think of streams for the impoverished or untraditional paths.
- One department has made good strides diversifying. North of 40% of recruits are minorities in past few classes. Council just passed our transformation report which includes hiring diversity officers, working with associations on how to hire since labour forces promotions to be based on years of service. Our big issue isn't the intake of classes, but promotions since sonority rules due to labour. Our issue is quickly becoming diversifying the senior ranks.
- What is the starting and end point of the Section 14 program, and would it be useful? What is the goal and when does it stop? One department did a recruitment class inviting 900 targeted people to attend, but only 2 attended the recruitment class which makes our pictures look bad and homogeneous.
- What about diversifying senior leadership, any thoughts or success stories?
- Small success because we created a specific job and gave notice so people could be prepared. Some success with females but less with BIPOC individuals.



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- One department started by looking at the CBA, so we removed all barriers from the CBA's which got rid of the seniority issue – promotions based on seniority rather than skill which is helping with recruitment and were getting more diversity based on that.
- Hicks Morley – Resources was mentioned; is this just in one area, or is this a wider part of the problem?
- There was some work done by the DEI committee at OFAI, but like most, we're fragmented pulling from a small pool of diverse candidates. We should start working collectively not each department vying for the same candidates.
- OAFI did some more research about who was coming into CTS testing, and it's a small number of diverse candidates.
- One departments Council has no interest in hiring targets at all. Toronto police has done a great job diversifying, but they have around 50 staff whose full time job is this. Need to ensure you're not seen lowering standards because the pushback would be incredible.
- Hicks Morley plans to send out a survey with a few follow up questions.
- Sean Reginio left the meeting.

6. 1006 Update

- Geoff Boisseau was not available, so Paul Hutt provided an update.
- There has been a lot of discussions from the transition from Guy Degagne to John Snider. Melanie is still involved, and Jamie Myer is lead instructor. Completed ice swift and surface, with confined space and vehicle rescue in progress.
- Expect remaining 1006 chapters completed by end of year.
- Aside from 1006, also working on Fire Officer III and IV and elevator rescue.
- Does this fall into where the OFM is mandating certification? If we're basing this on NFPA standards, and there are enough conversations around certification going on right now, but countless hours building this based on NFPA. If there is a shift away from NFPA, it should at least be flagged.
- OAFI has had a few meetings with the OFM. We did start a training task force to look at this issue and we have another meeting with OFM at the end of the week. We told OFM that certification is important to departments. There was mention of an Ontario Standard based on NFPA but no decisions yet. Trying to find a balance for more NFPP departments without the resources to deliver at the least, exterior only. Lots of mentions from the BC Playbook, but nothing concrete yet. We have huge issues with OFMEM capacity and if they have more to do, we don't know how it would be possible.
- NFPA 1006 should have no changes to those specialties, so the work we're doing will still be of value, even considering the range of rumors we have been hearing.
- Certification should be a case of when and not if.
- The Deputy Chief working group has been very helpful for the training program, but the lines are now blurred. There needs to be a group for oversight and a group for work and a delineation between the two. Chiefs shouldn't be sitting in on the deputy chiefs, so they speak their minds freely.



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- The Deputy Chief working group if you include the OFM, is around 25-30 people.
- With certification, the devil will be in the details. How it interacts with collective agreements is probably different even among the 12 members of this committee.
- This isn't just about Firefighter 1 and 2 but also Officer levels I, II and III and collective agreements. It affects everything including advancement courses.
- When the cannabis legislation got passed, the police received funds for training, we should too.
- The challenge is the transition, i.e., sitting at the 2013 standards instead of 2021 standards.
- OAFCh spoke to OFM about transition timing to change from the IFSAC PROBOARD certification from 2013 to 2021, and when to expect that.
- Last time, certification on technical rescue had issues with shift changes so that language should remain for the logistical piece.
- There was a discussion about fire chiefs attending the deputy chief meetings.
- It's assumed that only Deputy Chiefs attend and the subject matter experts they bring in.
- We should be advocating to update the standards to 2021.
- One Chief did attend a deputy meeting but did so during the transition which was the reason for attending.
- We're all wearing multiple hats and should be thinking of the future of the Deputy Chiefs' group meeting. Give them their marching orders and stay out of their way.

Action item: Paul Hutt to resend the deputy chiefs working group list.

- What is plan B? Not confident that we'll meet a deadline 2 months.
- Agreed. The province does not have the horsepower. The government does speak often to the learning contracts to help with training and if you could do it internally, they would push.
- We don't expect everyone to be certified by June 11, but we've been going through it for 4 years with some staff complaints but no seals because no one can vet their accomplishments. Smaller departments won't be interested at all in doing more complicated things.

7. WSIB Claims and Timeframes for Staffing Replacement

- A discussion took place about the long duration period with employees on WSIB. –One department can hire a replacement after 2 years but now have people off for four years and some are senior command, so what is the process in place for the replacement should they come back? Not always easy injuries to come back from. I have a platoon chief off for 4 years and trying to replace that position is a fight with HR.
- Run a qualification promotional process for a limited time in case they come back. It's a challenge, but it covers if they come back or done.
- One department has an agreement that they can go 5 over compliment due to WSIB claims. Fill officer vacancies with actors.
- Paul Hutt left the meeting.



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8. Pregnancy Policy vs. Modified Duties to Accommodate Process

- One department goes through corporate HR accommodation group process. We had a policy for non-hazardous duties, but it went to arbitration in 2015 and lost. Since then, tried to use the accommodation process. We have expanded female firefighters, which is now up to 20%. Association said they wanted a policy, but since we already lost once, seeking advice. FSWO has information on their website.
- Another department has a MOA. There is no language as to when an employee has to tell us. When the employee does, she can work Monday to Friday (5 days). A communicator may accommodate them on a 24 shift with day shift in dispatch. Also use standard language to treat each accommodation on its own.
- A different department noted that one of our employees worked for 3 months, but she didn't feel comfortable in bunker gear, but once they're accommodated, no longer part of the compliment. We just had another one who informed us less than 24 hours before their next shift, so we couldn't do it in time.

9. Vaccinations (Addition to agenda)

- Since one department came out with their vaccination policy, more employees are moving to a leave of absence. Anyone on WSIB or sick leave is excluded before it comes into effect. The union using the date of November 15 and are now applying WSIB using it as a way to avoid vaccination. Has anyone's employees trying to skip vaccinations using WSIB?
- Our policies have too many holes. Don't need vaccinations or to even disclose status.
- As of November 1, our policy is to suspend for 6 weeks if not vaccinated. If already on WSIB after 6 weeks, suspension terminated with cause. Therefore, we are getting more WSIB cases. The city has processes and are prepared to fight this. It is the same with sick time. We've started business continuity planning as we might have to suspend 200 people and there is no grace for them. The union has been told this as well.
- Our department started PCR for those off on October 1 and have extended to those on sick leave (even knee injuries have to send in PCR tests). We cut pay, to maintain active status employees I need PCR tests, cut off 6 shifts. We have about 4 of 300 employees refusing to disclose, everyone else is vaccinated. We took a hard line at the start with consequences.
- – Our municipality pays for rapid antigen which must be submitted by 9pm before the shift, otherwise leave without pay by 9:01pm. The communication has improved dramatically. Stopped paying sick time narratives. Come October 31, the employee will be on leave without pay permanently. We will have some challenges come November.
- Brampton will probably end up with something similar to Mississauga's policies.
- One department is already at \$2M overbudget due to overtime and a lot of paternity leaves. The local is worried about overtime and what it might mean for staffing of trucks. We looked at extra staff for each platoon but depends on overtime and only paying time vs time +, but at that point, trucks would come out of service. Come to work or trucks are out of service; the union agreed with that approach.



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- We try not to brown out trucks. The last time was 2010. Up to 50 overtime shifts, but up to \$1M in overtime costs. We might have to look at it. Even with the recruitment graduates, it won't eliminate overtime. When that happened in 2010, there is a staffing clause per vehicle.
- Lori Hamer and Bob Gilmore left the meeting.

10. Round Table – Emerging Issues/New Business

- Mississauga – Retiree benefits taking residence in USA should be decided soon
- Jim Jessop thanked everyone for their work and noted that Matt Pegg will be back on November 1st.

11. Adjournment

- Adam Grant moved to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Dave Cunliffe.