

CONSOLIDATED NATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS
for
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS

A. INTRODUCTION

This report on the Volunteer Fire Services in Canada was conducted by the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) at the request of the Minister of Finance, Hon. Jim Flaherty. At a meeting with representatives of CAFC, the Minister had expressed general support for the concept of personal income tax relief for volunteer firefighting personnel. He added, however, that CAFC still had to substantiate its arguments. The purpose of this report is to provide that substantiation.

Responses to the CAFC survey were received from 526 Volunteer Fire Departments and a further 118 Composite Fire Departments. There has never been a CAFC-generated survey with anything even remotely close to this response, indicating the extreme importance that the Volunteer Fire Services attach to personal income tax relief for volunteer firefighting personnel.

Given this high level of response, CAFC decided to prepare its first report solely on the Volunteer Fire Departments' input. The replies received from Composite Fire Departments will follow as soon as possible.

Not only was the total response impressive, it was broadly representative of all Provinces and Territories, as the following table demonstrates:

Responses by Province/Territory were as follows:

Alberta	44
British Columbia	46
Manitoba	36
New Brunswick	67
Newfoundland & Labrador	21
Nova Scotia	83
Ontario	61
Prince Edward Island	22
Quebec	92
Saskatchewan	49
Territories	5
Total	526

B. DEMOGRAPHICS

Permanent Population Served

Four hundred and nine Volunteer Fire Departments responded that they protect the lives and property of 1,513,440 Canadians. On average, they each protect 3,700 citizens. The number of responses is lower than expected because a translation error by CAFC's translator rendered Quebec's responses to this question unusable.

In many smaller communities, the Volunteer Fire Department is usually the only locally-based emergency first responder organization. The citizens they protect rely on their local Volunteer Fire Department not only to fight fires but also to address a wide range of other emergencies.

Typically, some 30 per cent of emergency responses by Volunteer Fire Departments involve fire suppression. The remainder cover a broad spectrum of non-fire emergencies including highway collisions requiring vehicle extrication equipment and techniques; farm and other non-highway accidents requiring emergency medical procedures and supplies; water rescues in both summer and winter requiring boats, special clothing and training; and so on.

Often Volunteer Firefighters are called upon to protect more than the citizens of their municipality. Highways and rail lines running through these communities carry with them the risk of accidents that injure passengers or release hazardous materials. While assistance in such circumstances will be dispatched from larger communities almost instantly, it is still the local Volunteer Fire Department that will be responsible for stabilizing the incident scene, rendering immediate medical assistance, sealing an area that has become contaminated, etc.

Over seventy-five per cent of responses were from Fire Departments serving fewer than 5,000 residents, as the following table demonstrates:

Less than 1,000 people	85 FDs	21.3%
1,000 – 4,999	216 FDs	54.1%
5,000 – 9,999	57 FDs	14.3%
10,000 or more	41 FDs	10.3%
Total	399 FDs	100.0%

This report has provided results in both percentages and means. Calculating means has been done on the following basis:

- arrange all responses from lowest to highest;
- eliminate the bottom and top 10 per cent of responses;
- the mid-point of the remaining responses is the mean.

The mean population served, by Province and Territory, is displayed in the following table. It is interesting that, using this calculation, 50 per cent of the Volunteer Fire Departments in the Provinces and Territories (Quebec excluded) serve a population of between 1,900 and 2,519 citizens.

	Population Served per FD		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta	219	25,000	1,500
British Columbia	8	36,500	2,500
Manitoba	150	14,000	2,500
New Brunswick	30	26,000	2,519
Nfld. & Labrador	75	10,000	750
Nova Scotia	200	18,000	2,000
Ontario	85	18,000	4,400
P.E. Island	1,100	18,000	3,000
Quebec	n/a	n/a	n/a
Saskatchewan	260	13,200	1,900
Territories	450	3,000	1,201

Area Served:

Four hundred and forty-six Volunteer Fire Departments said that they are responsible for the protection of 703,130 square kilometres of Canada. On average, they provide emergency first response to over 1,549 square kilometres per Fire Department. CAFC estimates there are 3,184 Volunteer Fire Departments in Canada. Assuming the average area protected by the 446 Fire Departments in our survey is reasonably accurate, it can be calculated that the 3,184 Volunteer Fire Departments protect about 4.9 million square kilometres of Canada.

Numbers of this magnitude may be difficult to conceptualize. If the 703,130 square kilometres documented in this study constituted the area of a country, it would be the 39th largest nation in the world, behind Zambia at 753,624 but ahead of Myanmar at 678,500 square kilometres. If the extrapolation of 4.9 million square kilometers protected by the entire Volunteer Fire Services is used, it would be the seventh largest country in the world, after Australia at 7,686,850 and before India at 3,287,590 square kilometres.

The following table demonstrates two important facts. First, 72.3 per cent of Volunteer Fire Departments are each responsible for protecting less than 500 square kilometres of Canada, with one-third of the total protecting less than 100 square kilometres. For eight of the Provinces and Territories, the mean is less than 500 square kilometres. CAFC is confident in stating that each of these Fire Departments operates out of a single Fire Hall. Second, for 13.6 per cent of survey respondents, the area under their protection is 1,000 square kilometers or more. For these extremely large areas, CAFC is not able to state whether their Volunteer Fire Departments have more than one Fire Hall.

Less than 100 sq.	147 FDs	33.0%
100 - 499 sq. km	175 FDs	39.3%
500 – 999 sq. km	63 FDs	14.1%
1,000 – 4,999 sq. km.	50 FDs	11.2%
5,000 -9,999 sq. km	5 FDs	1.1%
10,000 or more sq. km.	6 FDs	1.3%
Total	446 FDs	100.0%

The means analysis which follows confirms that some Volunteer Fire Departments are responsible for protecting either vast or quite small areas of Canada. Once these extremes are removed, the mean reveals that most Volunteer Fire Departments provide emergency first response within areas considerably less than 1,000 square kilometers.

	Area Served per FD in sq. kms.		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta	100	50,042	800
British Columbia	5	10,000	48
Manitoba	10	6,000	466
New Brunswick	3	6,600	250
Nfld. & Labrador	2	350	30
Nova Scotia	6	12,000	125
Ontario	6	19,937	373
P.E. Island	15	3,500	30
Quebec	5	1,311	210
Saskatchewan	8	9,348	800
Territories	8	80	10

Whether a fire is relatively close to a Fire Hall or many kilometres distant, the fact is that fires double in size for every minute that they are left unattended. A fire confined to one square metre in the first minute after ignition will typically grow to 16 square metres after five minutes and to 512 square metres after 10 minutes. A structure fire that is not being actively fought within about seven minutes of ignition will usually result in the Volunteer Firefighters arriving to confront a structure that is already fully engulfed in flame. Their

main role in such circumstances is to prevent the spread of the fire to nearby structures, and to secure the fire ground until the cause of the fire can be determined.

The time available for emergency response has deteriorated in recent years as a result of changes in building materials. Dimensional wood (e.g. 2”x 4” or 4”x 4”) has been replaced by main beams and trusses with laminates which are far more susceptible to failure under extreme heat, as found in a recent National Research Council study.

The lessons of this section that should be borne in mind as readers move through this report include:

- in rural, and particularly in remote, parts of Canada fire prevention (public education and inspections) should be a key element of an effective community fire service;
- members of Volunteer Fire Departments should be able to readily respond, both during and after work;
- apparatus and equipment should be up-to-date;
- a commitment to training for all volunteer firefighting personnel should be a national priority; and
- above all, way to reduce problems related to recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighting personnel must be addressed.

Personnel Reported

The following table shows that a total of 14,541 volunteer firefighters and officers comprised the 457 Volunteer Fire Departments that responded to this question.

Volunteer firefighters	11,472	78.9%
Volunteer officers	3,069	21.1%
Total	14,541	100.0%

CAFC estimates that there are 84,314 personnel in the Volunteer Fire Departments of Canada. Therefore, this survey represents 17.2 per cent of that total.

The tables below show the following:

- 83.2 per cent of volunteer firefighters are members of Volunteer Fire Departments composed of fewer than 30 firefighters; and
- 88.0 per cent of volunteer fire officers are members of Volunteer Fire Departments with nine or fewer officers.

Volunteer firefighters per Fire Department

Less than 10	14	3.1%
10 - 19	177	38.7%
20 – 29	189	41.4%
30 – 49	58	12.7%
50 – 99	17	3.7%
100 or more	2	0.4%
Total	457 FDs	100.0%

Volunteer officers per Fire Department

None	5	1.1%
1- 4	155	32.6%
5 - 9	258	54.3%
10 - 14	42	8.8%
15 – 19	9	1.9%
20 or more	6	1.3%
Total	475 FDs	100.0%

The importance of the above tables becomes obvious when considered within the context of the need to address problems related to the recruitment and training of volunteer firefighting personnel.

The majority of calls to Fire Departments for emergency assistance occur during the day. They include fires that occur during food preparation; traffic mishaps experienced by commuters, industrial or playground accidents and so on. Every time that a member is unable to continue serving altogether or during normal business hours, the loss in percentage terms to his or her Volunteer Fire Department significant. It means that remaining members of the Department are placed under greater pressure to take up the slack, a situation conducive to neither recruitment nor retention. It also means that the ability of the Fire Department to respond robustly to fires and other emergencies is strained and perhaps even undermined.

C. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Financial Status of Volunteer Fire Departments

The total operating budget for the 496 Fire Departments responding to this question was \$28,041,444, amounting to an average of \$56,535 per Fire Department.

Of this total dollar amount, the amount set aside for the compensation and reimbursement of volunteer firefighting personnel was 16.7 per cent of the total operating budget of \$28

million reported above, or an average of \$9,434 for each of the Volunteer Fire Departments responding.

The lowest percentage of the compensation/reimbursement budget to the total operating budget for each responding Volunteer Fire Department per Province/Territory was 0.0 per cent; the highest was 69.9%; and the mean was 12.3%, as the following table demonstrates:

	Volunteer Comp. Budget % of Total Budget		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta	0.0%	69.9%	12.3%
British Columbia	0.0%	49.7%	10.0%
Manitoba	8.8%	54.7%	22.2%
New Brunswick	0.0%	47.8%	7.0%
Nfld. & Labrador	0.0%	54.5%	0.0%
Nova Scotia	0.5%	24.3%	6.5%
Ontario	0.6%	66.8%	30.9%
P.E. Island	0.0%	33.3%	4.9%
Quebec	4.3%	84.0%	32.1%
Saskatchewan	0.0%	24.3%	6.5%
Territories	14.0%	40.0%	36.7%

Forms of compensation and reimbursement

The forms of compensation identified in responses to this survey were as follows:

- paid on call – by far the most common compensation mechanism,
- annual honorarium,
- training and related duties,
- group benefits,
- stipends,
- stand by,
- property tax reductions,
- access to physical fitness program,
- assistance with RRSP premiums, and
- assistance with vehicle registration and license plate costs.

The forms of reimbursement were as follows:

- kilometre allowance for use of personal vehicle – by far the more common mechanism; and
- expenses for responding, covering items such as meals or meal allowances while responding, broken eye glasses and ruined personal clothing.

A total of 87 responding Volunteer Fire Departments offer reimbursement in the form of a kilometre allowance while 59 cover other expenses incurred while responding. The following table provides the Provincial/Territorial breakdown for these forms of reimbursement:

	Number of Fire Departments Reimbursing Expenses	
	Kilometre Allowance	Other Response Expenses
Alberta	9	7
British Columbia	4	3
Manitoba	17	6
New Brunswick	4	1
Nfld. & Labrador	2	0
Nova Scotia	4	1
Ontario	12	10
P.E. Island	1	4
Quebec	28	19
Saskatchewan	6	8
Territories	0	0
Total	87	59

Reimbursement of legitimate expenses incurred in emergency first response should not be considered income for personal income tax purposes. It bears noting, however, that the vast majority of Volunteer Fire Departments do not reimburse expenses incurred by their members in the performance of their duties as voluntary emergency first responders.

The balance of this section will be devoted to compensation issues.

It needs to be noted that there appears to be little agreement on what various terms mean. The definitions of “paid-on-call”, “annual honorarium” and “stipend” are not necessarily the same from Fire Department to Fire Department. In addition, while the survey asked for average annual compensation per volunteer firefighter, a significant number of responses were in terms of dollars per hour. With no indication of the number of hours involved, this information was not usable.

No Compensation of any Form

Of the 562 total Volunteer Fire Departments that took part in this survey, 82 of them (14.6%) reported that their members received no compensation of any form.

Compensation Practices

Page seven of this report lists the various forms of monetary compensation identified in this survey. For those respondents who provided average annual compensation per person information, this data was totalled per Province/Territory, yielding the following tables:

	<u>Compensation</u> <u>Total \$</u>	<u># Fire</u> <u>Departments</u>	<u>Average \$</u>
Alberta	22,792	15	1,519
British Columbia	12,465	15	813
Manitoba	39,172	25	1,567
New Brunswick	11,928	20	596
Nfld. & Labrador	3,893	6	649
Nova Scotia	7,275	15	485
Ontario	55,672.	28	1,988
P.E. Island	9,805	11	891
Quebec	172,088	62	2,776
Saskatchewan	29,749	19	1,566
Territories	3,600	2	1,800
Totals	368,439	218	1,690

	<u>Low</u>	<u>Compensation</u> <u>High</u> (in dollars)	<u>Mean</u>
Alberta	83	8,000	1,000
British Columbia	60	3,500	658
Manitoba	130	5,970	1,008
New Brunswick	55	2,550	300
Nfld. & Labrador	30	2,125	200
Nova Scotia	33	1,400	450
Ontario	25	11,344	1,430
P.E. Island	50	3,800	200
Quebec	50	10,072	2,000
Saskatchewan	45	9,000	650
Territories	n/a	n/a	n/a

It is obvious from the above two tables that personnel do not become members of Volunteer Fire Departments because they expect to earn significant income. It should be equally obvious, however, that these level of compensation, far below the minimum wage

in every Province/Territory, cannot be regarded as helpful in addressing the recruitment and retention problems facing Volunteer Fire Departments.

The Annual Honorarium Issue

Inevitably, when requests for personal income tax relief for volunteer firefighting personnel are made to the Government of Canada, the annual honorarium provision is cited by the Government as a key reason for denying that request. This device provides that Volunteer Fire Services personnel do not have to declare as income the first \$1,000 of the honorarium they receive annually from the municipalities that they protect. The response from CAFC and other organizations has consistently been that few municipalities can afford to pay an honorarium of any type, and those that can usually provide for amounts well below \$1,000.

The following table demonstrates the number of Fire Departments, by Province/Territory, that provide annual honoraria to their firefighters, officers or both:

	<u>Firefighters</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Both</u>
Alberta	6	2	0
British Columbia	4	1	1
Manitoba	7	6	0
New Brunswick	9	2	2
Nfld. & Labrador	5	0	0
Nova Scotia	7	0	0
Ontario	15	2	1
P.E. Island	12	0	0
Quebec	2	9	1
Saskatchewan	6	5	0
Territories	0	0	0
Totals	73	28	5

A total of 106 (20.2%) Volunteer Fire Departments out of the 526 Departments responding to the survey utilize annual honoraria as a means of compensating their firefighters and officers. For firefighters, 74.0% of them receive honoraria of less than \$1,000 per year, as the following table indicates:

<u>Firefighters Annual Honoraria</u>	<u>Departments</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Less than \$500	37	50.7
\$500 - \$999	17	23.3
\$1,000 - \$1,999	10	13.7
\$2,000 - \$4,999	7	9.6
\$5,000 or more	2	2.7
Totals	73	100.0

Volunteer Fire Chiefs generally have higher annual honoraria than do Volunteer Firefighters as a reflection of the extra command and administrative responsibilities they shoulder. The following table illustrates that fact:

<u>Fire Chiefs Annual Honoraria</u>	<u>Departments</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Less than \$500	2	11.8
\$500 - \$999	4	23.5
\$1,000 - \$1,999	4	23.5
\$2,000 - \$4,999	3	17.6
\$5,000 - \$9,999	2	11.8
\$10,000 or more	2	11.8
Totals	17	100.0

D. HOURS OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY PER YEAR

Respondents were asked to estimate the number of hours members spend annually on average in their various responsibilities related to being a Volunteer Firefighter. The results were as follows:

	<u>Hours reported per function</u>	<u>% of total hours</u>	<u># of FDs</u>
Emergency responses	54,797	28.7%	481
Training	46,056	24.4%	502
Equip/apparatus maintenance	18,330	9.7%	470
Fire Hall maintenance	12,613	6.7%	407
Fire Prevention education	10,080	5.4%	435
Fire Prevention inspections	6,461	3.5%	254
Fund raising	18,871	10.0%	358
Administration	15,071	8.0%	392
Other	6,812	3.6%	238
Total	188,467 hours	100.0%	

There are several points revealed in the above table that should be particularly noted as follows:

- The fact that Volunteer Fire Departments devote more time to their emergency responses than in training for these responses is a source of concern to CAFC. Virtually every emergency response is in answer to a summons for help from individuals in peril. Effective response in such situations requires proper ongoing training. Training is also important given the fact that Volunteer Firefighters are constantly inserting themselves into dangerous situations. Liability law in Canada means that if Volunteer Firefighters are not properly trained, they and their Fire Departments are exposing themselves to heavy punishment.
- After emergency responses and training hours, fundraising hours are the third most time-consuming function of Volunteer Fire Departments. That is a clear indication of the limited financial resources available to many Fire Departments across Canada. The fact that fundraising is so necessary to so many Volunteer Fire Departments is most certainly not going to be an inducement to join them.
- Fire prevention has two major facets: education and inspections. Pages four and five of this document discuss the importance of vigorous attention to fire prevention activities, particularly where long response times are routine. It should be a source of concern to the Government of Canada, and indeed to all Canadians, that the Volunteer Fire Services spend less of their time on fire prevention activities than on any other specific responsibility.

The balance of this section provides a detailed breakdown of all major functions of Volunteer Fire Departments and is useful reading.

Emergency Response Hours

Total responses	481
Total hours reported	54,797
Average hours reported	113
% of total hours reported	28.7%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (37 responses)	6	414	75
British Columbia (41 responses)	6	300	120
Manitoba (35 responses)	10	480	82
New Brunswick (69 responses)	12	526	120
Nfld. & Labrador (17 responses)	6	2,000	45
Nova Scotia (78 responses)	20	750	100
Ontario (53 responses)	4	700	100
P.E. Island (22 responses)	10	350	100
Quebec (80 responses)	15	380	60
Saskatchewan (46 responses)	5	300	60
Territories (3 responses)	10	280	10

Training Hours

Total responses	502
Total hours reported	46,056
Average hours reported	92
% of total hours reported	24.4%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (40 responses)	2	300	100
British Columbia (43 responses)	6	300	120
Manitoba (35 responses)	12	350	60
New Brunswick (74 responses)	4	208	40
Nfld. & Labrador (17 responses)	30	240	100
Nova Scotia (79 responses)	10	520	75
Ontario (58 responses)	30	700	92
P.E. Island (22 responses)	32	300	83
Quebec (85 responses)	8	350	50
Saskatchewan (46 responses)	8	172	50
Territories (3 responses)	40	200	80

Equipment/ Apparatus Maintenance Hours

Total responses	470
Total hours reported	18,330
Average hours reported	39
% of total hours reported	9.7%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (34 responses)	2	310	20
British Columbia (39 responses)	4	120	20
Manitoba (32 responses)	2	150	12
New Brunswick (66 responses)	4	208	40
Nfld. & Labrador (18 responses)	1	60	24
Nova Scotia (78 responses)	4	40	25
Ontario (53 responses)	2	300	22
P.E. Island (21 responses)	2	250	35
Quebec (79 responses)	7	260	25
Saskatchewan (47 responses)	5	100	20
Territories (3 responses)	10	60	12

Fire Hall Maintenance

Total responses	407
Total hours reported	12,613
Average hours reported	31
% of total hours reported	6.7%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (35 responses)	2	100	20
British Columbia (39 responses)	1	102	18
Manitoba (31 responses)	1	100	12
New Brunswick (62 responses)	1	274	30
Nfld. & Labrador (15 responses)	1	60	10
Nova Scotia (73 responses)	2	180	20
Ontario (52 responses)	1	202	20
P.E. Island (21 responses)	2	200	25
Quebec (76 responses)	2	120	20
Saskatchewan (45 responses)	2	100	10
Territories (3 responses)	10	60	12

Fire Prevention Education

Total responses	435
Total hours reported	10,080
Average hours reported	23
% of total hours reported	5.4%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (32 responses)	1	100	10
British Columbia (31 responses)	1	60	10
Manitoba (30 responses)	1	60	10
New Brunswick (69 responses)	1	100	20
Nfld. & Labrador (16 responses)	1	80	10
Nova Scotia (75 responses)	1	100	10
Ontario (52 responses)	1	380	10
P.E. Island (18 responses)	6	100	12
Quebec (69 responses)	2	200	20
Saskatchewan (43 responses)	1	100	10
Territories (3 responses)	5	20	10

Fire Prevention Inspections

Total responses	254
Total hours reported	6,461
Average hours reported	25
% of total hours reported	3.5%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (13 responses)	2	40	10
British Columbia (13 responses)	1	125	10
Manitoba (22 responses)	1	120	20
New Brunswick (19 responses)	1	200	10
Nfld. & Labrador (13 responses)	1	180	10
Nova Scotia (35 responses)	1	50	10
Ontario (21 responses)	1	200	30
P.E. Island (20 responses)	3	100	12
Quebec (60 responses)	1	200	24
Saskatchewan (36 responses)	1	100	10
Territories (2 responses)	10	12	n/a

Fundraising

Total responses	358
Total hours reported	18,871
Average hours reported	53
% of total hours reported	10.0%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (28 responses)	3	100	25
British Columbia (20 responses)	1	60	20
Manitoba (25 responses)	1	75	20
New Brunswick (56 responses)	1	800	40
Nfld. & Labrador (16 responses)	10	400	25
Nova Scotia (76 responses)	5	400	50
Ontario (44 responses)	2	300	20
P.E. Island (20 responses)	5	100	30
Quebec (40 responses)	2	150	12
Saskatchewan (32 responses)	6	200	30
Territories (1 response)	n/a	n/a	12

Administrative

Total responses	392
Total hours reported	15,071
Average hours reported	38
% of total hours reported	8.0%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (30 responses)	1	150	20
British Columbia (37 responses)	1	200	24
Manitoba (33 responses)	1	350	24
New Brunswick (60 responses)	1	305	25
Nfld. & Labrador (17 responses)	5	150	35
Nova Scotia (69 responses)	5	250	24
Ontario (44 responses)	2	360	10
P.E. Island (22 responses)	5	100	24
Quebec (71 responses)	1	240	20
Saskatchewan (37 responses)	1	100	20
Territories (2 responses)	2	12	n/a

Other

Total responses	238
Total hours reported	6,812
Average hours reported	29
% of total hours reported	3.6%

	Average Individual Hours		
	Low	High	Mean
Alberta (15 responses)	4	100	20
British Columbia (24 responses)	2	150	12
Manitoba (19 responses)	1	200	20
New Brunswick (23 responses)	1	120	20
Nfld. & Labrador (9 responses)	5	140	12
Nova Scotia (46 responses)	4	100	20
Ontario (23 responses)	2	80	20
P.E. Island (13 responses)	5	50	20
Quebec (44 responses)	4	100	20
Saskatchewan (21 responses)	1	250	10
Territories (1 response)	n/a	n/a	2

E. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The following table indicates that most Volunteer Fire Departments are experiencing difficulties of varying degrees with respect to the recruitment and retention of members. The degree of difficulty appears to be particularly acute with respect to the recruitment of new members, with 47.8 per cent of Fire Departments reporting difficulties that are either major or extreme.

	Recruitment		Retention	
No difficulty	42	8.1%	73	14.5%
Moderate difficulty	230	44.1%	282	56.2%
Major difficulty	160	30.7%	105	20.4%
Extreme difficulty	89	17.1%	42	8.4%
Total responses	521	100.0%	502	100.0%

Page six of this report indicates that 83.2 per cent of the Volunteer Fire Departments participating in CAFC's survey have fewer than 30 members. In the private sector, a company with fewer than 30 employees would, by all measurements, be deemed a decidedly small business. If almost 48 per cent of these firms were experiencing major or

extreme problems in the recruitment of employees, this would certainly be a source of general concern both within the private sector and government.

That concern should apply equally to problems occurring within the Volunteer Fire Services. Volunteer Fire Departments save Canadian municipalities millions of dollars annually. Without these volunteers, municipalities would be obliged to raise taxes significantly or to curtail fire protection services to local businesses and individuals.

Respondents to CAFC's survey were asked the degree to which several issues were barriers to the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Inadequate compensation for out-of-pocket expenses posed the least difficulty while a lack of regular employment close at hand was the most serious problem. It bears noting that, in no case, did 50 per cent or more of survey respondents indicate that they were experiencing no problems with respect to these six possible barriers to recruitment and retention as the following tables indicate:

Inadequate compensation for emergency response

	Recruitment		Retention	
No problem	177	34.0%	187	36.0%
Minor problem	211	40.5%	220	42.4%
Major problem	133	25.5%	112	21.6%
Total responses	521	100.0%	519	100.0%

Inadequate compensation for training

	Recruitment		Retention	
No problem	165	31.8%	177	34.2%
Minor problem	198	38.2%	191	37.0%
Major problem	156	30.0%	149	28.8%
Total responses	519	100.0%	517	100.0%

Inadequate reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses

	Recruitment		Retention	
No problem	255	48.5%	255	49.6%
Minor problem	155	29.5%	162	31.5%
Major problem	116	22.0%	97	18.9%
Total responses	526	100.0%	514	100.0%

Lack of regular employment close at hand

	Recruitment		Retention	
No problem	87	16.8%	94	18.3%
Minor problem	166	32.0%	159	30.9%
Major problem	266	51.2%	262	50.8%
Total responses	519	100.0%	515	100.0%

Employer does not permit volunteering

	Recruitment		Retention	
No problem	195	37.4%	224	44.2%
Minor problem	239	45.9%	212	41.8%
Major problem	87	16.7%	71	14.0%
Total responses	521	100.0%	507	100.0%

Employer does not compensate when employees responding

	Recruitment		Retention	
No problem	173	34.1%	176	34.0%
Minor problem	186	36.7%	175	33.8%
Major problem	148	29.2%	166	32.2%
Total responses	507	100.0%	517	100.0%

The issue of a lack of regular employment close at hand is a serious problem that will only grow more severe as local employment opportunities become more scarce and many citizens are obliged to commute to jobs in nearby larger communities. This problem has become particularly serious during the working day when many members of Volunteer Fire Departments are outside their community and totally unable to respond to emergencies. As noted on page six, most calls for help are received during the day. . This is placing added pressure on members who are employed locally. Often these are the older members of the Department. Where there is no employment within commuting distance, younger people in particular are obliged to move away from their home communities on a permanent basis.

This should not be taken to mean that the problem resolves itself when members return home after work and on weekends. Competing demands of spouses and children are making it extremely difficult for many members to rationalize the time that is required to serve their community through their local Volunteer Fire Department. That rationalization becomes particularly challenging when it is clear that most members of Volunteer Fire Departments across Canada are financially poorer as a result of their volunteering.

Survey respondents were asked what other problems they are having with recruitment and retention. Their answers can be found in the Provincial/Territorial reports.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the degree to which an element of personal income tax relief provided by the Government of Canada would address problems that Volunteer Fire Departments are having with recruitment and retention. Almost 96 per cent of them stated that personal income tax relief would be helpful in addressing their recruitment challenges, with 70.8 per cent stating that it would be of major assistance. Similarly, over 96 per cent of them stated that personal income tax relief would be helpful in addressing their retention challenges, with 75.0 per cent stating that it would be of major assistance.

The following table summarizes these observations:

	Recruitment		Retention	
No help	23	4.4%	19	3.7%
Minor help	129	24.8%	109	21.3%
Major help	368	70.8%	383	75.0%
Total responses	520	100.0%	511	

Survey respondents were asked for their suggestions of other measures the Government of Canada could take to encourage the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Their replies appear in the Provincial/Territorial reports.

F. CONCLUSION

The Introduction to this report stated that the survey process had elicited an unprecedented response from the Volunteer Fire Services, indicating “the extreme importance that the Volunteer Fire Services attach to personal income tax relief for volunteer firefighting personnel.” If anything, the degree of anticipation that substantial personal income tax relief will be forthcoming in Budget 2010 has intensified as this report was completed and circulated widely within the Canadian Fire Services.

CAFC has made it clear that the exact form the personal income tax relief for Volunteer Fire Services personnel takes is left to the Finance Minister’s judgement.

On behalf of the membership of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and the more than 84,000 Volunteer Fire Services personnel across Canada, Finance Minister Flaherty is thanked for having provided the encouragement that led directly to the production of this report.

The Canadian Fire Services await the release of Budget 2010.

