



Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs

Response to discussion paper:

## Modernizing wildland fire management in Ontario

August 29, 2024

<b>Name</b>	Shaun Cameron
<b>Designation</b>	Program and Policy Advisor, OAFCh

Modernizing Ontario's Wildland Fire Management – Public comment closes on Thursday, August 29 at 11:59 AM.

<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-8756>

### **Strengthen Collective Responsibility for Wildland Fire Management**

1. Do you support strengthening collective responsibility for wildland fire management in Ontario? What steps can be taken to immediately strengthen collective responsibility for wildland fire management?
  - Within Ontario's Fire Region, Ontario should consult with the Fire Chief's, many of whom are Community Emergency Management Coordinators (CEMC), on all aspects of wildland fire management in consultation with MNR and Emergency Management Ontario (TBS)
  - Further progressing the FireSmart programs to train communities in the practice of fire mitigation and planned burnings practices.
2. Do you have suggestions for an approach or model that would support advancing the collective responsibility for wildland fire management?
  - Like Mutual Aid fire coordinators, local fire chiefs are able to assist municipalities, provincial government and Indigenous nations in preparing and striking agreements within the MNR Ministry to broaden the scope for these agreements would allow and support partnerships and collaborations that can be more responsive to changing wildland fire risks.

### **Improve Ontario's awareness of wildland fire risk**

3. What types of information and tools would help individuals and communities with identifying and understanding wildland fire risk?
  - Ensuring that local fire chiefs, council, Indigenous governments are all updated by MNR, along with EMO, federal government agencies all in one mainstream coordinated Interactive Fire Map, community updates and daily briefings will be beneficial to management of wildland and partners to understand the risk of fire. As well to understand the mitigation of the fire.
4. Industrial activity can cause wildland fires. Many types of industrial activities are already subject to various fire prevention rules and regulations. Do you have suggestions about how to improve the approach to preventing and preparing for wildland fires caused by industrial activity?
  - Industry should be invited to the table through the MNR for Fire Smart training, update to the local community their activities in a reactionary as well as proactive discussion with local council. The integration of wildland fire risk information into

enhanced wildland fire preparedness, planning, prevention, and mitigation initiatives such as evacuation or emergency planning, open-air burning restrictions, staff training, land use planning, and vegetation management practices would be beneficial for all community participants including industry.

### **Expand prevention and mitigation of wildland fire**

5. What resources and support are necessary for municipalities and industry to enhance wildland fire management planning that comprehensively addresses wildland fire risks?
  - Provide funding to local leadership to conduct fire assessments for those within the fire region.
  - As fires are occurring more often in the wildland/urban interface (WUI) it is important to conduct assessments throughout the Province and not just in the Fire Regions (IFR).
6. How can we foster collaboration among individuals, municipalities, industry, Indigenous communities, and other emergency partners to build capacity, invest in, and take proactive measures for wildland fire prevention and mitigation?
  - Offer incentives to local community to participate in FireSmart and other local awareness campaigns.
7. What innovative approaches can we explore to collectively fund prevention and mitigation activities?
  - Please see above regarding offering local grant to provide an update to local government to review mitigation and prevention strategies.

### **Enhance Preparedness and Response to Wildland Fire**

8. How should MNR better prepare and respond to wildland fires?
  - Establish communications to all partners via the MNR, EMO, and local and federal leadership to ensure there are Wildland Fire response plans in place.
9. How could individuals, Indigenous partners, organizations, and other governments better prepare and respond to wildland fires and how could capacity be enhanced?
  - Proactively list these partnerships in the local government mutual aid agreements. Continue to educate, provide awareness and address mitigation of wildland fires with all levels of government.
  - Currently in Ontario when wildfires require more staffing response teams are hired out of Province or from other countries, as they have the training to fight such fires. Expand wildfire training to the 31, 000 firefighters in Ontario as there is a huge compliment of responders at hand within Ontario. Similar to mutual aid there are events in regions and the others not impacted can lend assistance.

10. What is needed for MNR and other emergency services, Indigenous partners, municipalities, and industry/ businesses to improve coordination and sharing roles and resources?
- Continue to be brought to the table throughout the year, pre fire season, during and after wildland fire season.

### **Strengthen rules and consequences for non-compliance with forest fire laws**

11. Are these proposals the appropriate enforcement and compliance measures to support compliance?
- Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPs) are already successfully used in many municipalities for the enforcement of other legislation and by-laws. Expanding its use would be another tool that can help with compliance.
12. What additional measures or authorities should be considered to effectively encourage compliance with the Act or the regulations?
- No further comment beyond question 11.
13. What further consequences should be contemplated for individuals, organizations and companies that fail to comply with the Act or the regulations?
- No further comment beyond question 11.