Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia

Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, May 25, 2025

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1) Call to Order – President Jones called the meeting of May 30th, 2025, to order at 10.01am. President Jones called for a moment of silence.

2) Approval of Minutes –

Motion: Moved by Larry Vain, seconded by George Derabbie, to approve the minutes of March 25th, 2025. **Motion Carried.**

3) Business Arising from the Minutes – N/A

Additions to the Agenda:
Munn Insurance Presentation

The presentation began with introductions of Brian and Dave, followed by a brief overview of the company's history, current offerings, and their commitment moving forward.

George Derabbie asked whether the presentation could cover departmental specifics, and the response was that this can be developed—possibly in a PDF format.

Ken Stuebing inquired about bundling insurance services, and it was confirmed that bundling is available and typically results in cost savings.

Rod raised a question regarding the value of fire trucks and whether the 25-year replacement standard still applies. It was noted that most replacements occur within 20 or even 3 years, but providers could be approached to explore potential flexibility on this.

Doug brought up concerns about the rising cost of Directors Insurance. He was asked about attendance numbers, associated risks, etc. Doug noted that rising premiums appear to be part of a broader industry trend. Brian committed to working with insurance providers to negotiate the best possible rates and to demonstrate the organization's actual level of risk.

DRDC Research and Development Project – Scott Ramsey and Chris Cromwell

In 2003, the Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) issued a unique call for grant applications titled *"Lighting the Path of AI."* This initiative sought to establish a research network (Micronet), resulting in numerous proposals. Several were shortlisted and published, with projects expanding through partnerships with various agencies to develop innovative, AI-driven solutions.

Chris, a PhD with a strong background in research, has been leading similar projects in Halifax. One of the key outcomes has been the development of AI-enabled Emergency Response and Decision Support Systems (ERADS). Through strong partnerships, the team has successfully driven technological innovation—supporting five PhD students, four Master's students, and actively recruiting more to sustain and grow the research network.

The focus of the current project is to integrate AI into emergency response workflows. The goal is to develop an interoperable platform tailored for fire services across Nova Scotia, while aligning with provincial and federal emergency management systems.

The project has three core components:

1. **Preparedness & Risk Reduction**
   This phase emphasizes building organizational resilience by using AI to support emergency response planning. It includes:
   - AI-assisted tools to assess emergency response needs
   - Fire risk indexes and general community risk profiling
   - Population risk analysis
   - Resource allocation optimization
   - Tracking roles, responsibilities, policies, and guidelines
2. **Interoperability & Situational Awareness**
   Development of a live incident dashboard that provides a *Common Operating Picture* across agencies. Features include:
   - Real-time data feeds during major emergencies
   - Scalable usage for both small and large incidents
   - Digital ICS (Incident Command System) forms
   - Text and photo communication between on-scene personnel and command platforms
   - Cross-agency coordination and accountability tools
3. **Mobile Incident Management Platform**
   A mobile-first interface integrated with the main platform, allowing:
   - Incident Commanders to log in on-scene
   - Voice-to-text communication
   - AI-assisted call logging and benchmarking
   - A complete, chronologically organized incident report at the end of each event

This project represents a sustainable, scalable model for AI integration in emergency services, with significant potential for national expansion.

Chris Cromwell – AI Emergency Response Demo for BOD

Chris Cromwell presented to the Board of Directors and delivered a live demonstration of the AI emergency response platform. A sample emergency call was provided to illustrate how the system documents and processes incidents in real time. The platform is integrated with radio systems to capture and document all aspects of a call automatically.

This digital tool is designed to improve operational efficiency; however, whether it ultimately makes workflows easier or more complex will be evaluated through ongoing research at Dalhousie University.

Ken S. thanked Chris for the presentation and expressed enthusiasm about the work happening in Halifax. He noted its alignment with several key initiatives underway at FSANS, emphasizing that the platform could be highly beneficial not only for the organization but for all emergency services across Nova Scotia.

One notable feature highlighted was the ability to send an SMS message during a mayday situation. The system enables immediate connection and communication with personnel at the scene, facilitating rapid response. Additionally, it performs automated post-incident analysis to extract lessons learned and provides incident documentation almost instantly.

Chris emphasized that AI is not intended to replace humans in emergency management but to enhance operations. Tasks such as post-event analysis, which currently take days or weeks, can be streamlined and validated within hours using AI tools.

Paul inquired about integration with NextGen 911. Scott responded that while the full system is still in development, components of the project do align with NextGen 911 goals. The platform includes modules for community safety checklists, home safety plans, and business profile integration. Over time, these elements can be linked to support the NextGen 911 framework.

Rod raised a question about communications logistics—specifically, how the system integrates with local radio channels. It was explained that the platform is modular and can be customized to connect with existing radio systems and communication channels. While some integration work is still ongoing, there are innovations in progress to address these needs.

The AI platform is designed to enable near-instant movement of information during an incident. It filters incoming data, identifies the most relevant details, and presents them in a usable format for first responders—whether through visual displays, audio cues, smart goggles, or other delivery methods.

Chris noted that one of the key benefits of the system is a significant reduction in administrative workload. By automating data collection and documentation, the platform allows responders and command staff to focus more on operational priorities and less on paperwork.

Governance Review – Consultant Update (Erica Thomas)

Erica Thomas held a brief introductory meeting at 1:00 PM, featuring roundtable introductions and participation both in-person and online. This marks the beginning of the governance review process.

Project Kickoff & Structure:

- The internal project team has begun meeting this week.
- The consultants will also meet with the advisory committee to formally initiate the process.

Project Website:

- A dedicated Google Site has been created to serve as the central hub for project updates, timelines, and event registration (e.g., workshops).
- While it's not a formal website, it will be accessible via a shared link. Anyone with the link will be able to access the content.
- FSANS will also host a project page on its website for broader accessibility.

Project Phases:

Phase 1: Project Initiation

- Meetings with the project team to finalize timelines and refine the project plan.

Phase 2: Desk Research

- Focused on reviewing documents and information from key stakeholders, including the Office of the Fire Marshal and Fire Commissioners.
- Engagement will be ongoing, and participants may be contacted for additional input.

Phase 3: Field Engagement

- A province-wide engagement phase including:
    - In-person workshops (day and evening sessions)
    - Surveys
    - One-on-one interviews
    - A "road tour" approach with a team of six—starting in Halifax, then splitting into northern and southern teams
- Evening workshops will cater to volunteer firefighters with day jobs; daytime sessions will target municipal representatives.
- The goal is to reach as many participants as possible, though not every community can be visited. Central locations will be selected based on input.

Timeline:

- August and September will focus on compiling the findings and writing the final report.
- Writing will occur throughout the process, with the **final report expected by the end of September**.
- Occasional workshops may still take place during this period as needed.

Ongoing Communication & Oversight:

- Information will be continuously shared through the advisory committee.
- Chris Harrell will meet bi-weekly with Greg to ensure smooth coordination.
- The website will remain flexible and will be updated as needed.

Additional Notes:

- The consultants will attend the upcoming Maritime Fire Chiefs meeting and may host an engagement session there.
- With extensive experience working with fire departments across Atlantic Canada, the team is enthusiastic about collaborating on this project.
- Surveys will be tailored for different stakeholder groups (e.g., firefighters, administrators), and all responses will remain confidential.
- The full engagement plan is still being finalized.

4) Review of Action Items – n/a letters for folks to work on nothing major

5) Executive Reports

5. (A) Presidents Report –

Primary Focus:
Following the recent special meeting and official approval to move forward, the governance review has become the top priority. Work has been focused on initiating the partnership with Transitional Solutions, finalizing contracts, and launching the review process.

Key Activities & Engagements:

- **Fire Records Management System (Capstone/Province):**
  Meetings held with provincial representatives to provide input on fire records management system needs. More sessions are planned to ensure solutions align with operational requirements.
- **Ongoing Meetings:**
  - **Munn Insurance**
  - **Scott Ramsey (DNRD/AI Research)**
  - **Transitional Solutions**
- **EMO Conference (Last Weekend):**
  Governance review was a hot topic, and many questions were raised. Some misinformation was circulating—particularly among municipalities—that the review was aimed at assessing their individual fire departments.
  → **Clarification:** Greg addressed this concern directly with Kim Ramsay (AMANS), making it clear that the governance review is *not* a departmental-level assessment.
  → Greg will send formal correspondence to municipalities to reinforce this clarification.

Wildland Fire Training Discussion:

Greg raised concerns about inconsistencies in wildland fire training across the province:

- Most departments are only receiving classroom-based training with no practical component.
- Some departments (e.g., Chester and Shelburne) do offer both.
- Greg consulted with Jim Rudderham and confirmed the need for both classroom and practical training.
- He will follow up with Jim to ensure alignment and clarity across departments.

Governance Review Advisory Committee:

- A **15-member Advisory Committee** has been formed, with representation from across the province, including IAFF members and mostly FSANS Board members.
- **Committee Role:**
    - Provide guidance and advice throughout the review process
    - Act as a sounding board for ideas and draft documents
    - Promote and encourage local engagement and participation
    - Attend engagement sessions and committee meetings
    - Provide timely feedback (especially during summer months when quick action is required)
    - Serve as ambassadors for the future of the fire service in Nova Scotia

Next Steps & Timeline:

- **September 29th:** Advisory Committee to meet with Transitional Solutions to discuss:
    - Review process and engagement planning
    - Website and survey tools developed for firefighters and partner organizations
    - Scheduling of upcoming engagement sessions
- **Information & Outreach:**
    - A project-specific website has been developed as the central info hub
    - Erica Thomas (consultant) will present to the Board later today
- **Ongoing Coordination:**
    - Greg and Krista continue to meet bi-weekly for updates
    - Media interest in the project remains high, with numerous requests received

Motion: Moved by Greg Jones and seconded by Paul Gould and Terry MacAloney, to accept the Presidents Report. **Motion Carried.**

5. (B) 1st Vice President – Rod Neilsen – Work involvement was much the same as Greg. VERBAL

5. (C) 2nd Vice President – Nick Power – Meetings Attended:

- Participated in a couple of MFCA meetings.
- Attended a couple of NAC meetings.
- Took part in several Governance Review meetings.
- Attended a special FSANS meeting focused on decisions related to the Governance Review.
- Participated in several Executive Committee meetings.
- Had Health and Wellness meeting.

- Had a Resolutions meeting.
- Attended a meeting at the Digby Fire Hall with the Digby association

Motion: Moved by Nick Power and seconded by Dave Sponagle, to accept the 2nd Vice Presidents Report. **Motion Carried.**

6. Administrative Assistants Report – Conference completion and organization of supplies, financials, minutes from AGM, update website, meeting with Greg and emails and inquiries. Verbal.

7. County Reports

Larry Varin, Queen County – There is repair needed to a tanker and hopefully that will be completed soon.

Dave Sponagle, Pictou County - Normal reporting for spring with no major calls. The most recent news is that New Glasgow town council still has not signed the mutual aid agreement. It is unclear what is happening, will they charge us for going to get water? We want to know why the agreement still is not signed and no information is being shared.

Debra Henry, Clare/Digby – Clare's review has been completed and will report on this at the next BOD meeting.

Terry MacAloney, Hants County - East Hants is still working on writing an RFP to have a fire service review done. Hoping to have it completed this year. Municipality of East Hants is very concerned with the fire service review. Greg met wit the fire services coordinator there and had conversation.

Yarmouth County – Paul Gould - Municipality of Argyle Fire Service Review:
Not too much to update as meetings have been postponed. The latest from the Municipality is that they have been working on some draft documents such as a Volunteer Fire Membership Policy (for physical fitness expectations and training requirements, etc.); a job description for the Fire Coordinator; a Hazard & Risk Assessment; and Roles & Responsibilities for Departments. The Fire Inspector, who is assisting in the review, has been going around to speak with the chiefs regarding a previous request on filling out FUS Community Update and Fire Station forms.
- Yarmouth County Mutual Aid Association:
* Our past president, Lynn Seeley, passed away on April 2, 2025. The funeral was held on April 9th
* Our new president is Lake Vaughan firefighter Morgan Churchill
* The association is looking to form some new committees to deal with training, recruitment/retention, and representation
- Training:
Yarmouth will be hosting Level 1 training likely in the fall. This will be the fire school's hybrid course.
- Calls:
For April, the most calls fall in the medical category (21), followed by alarms (18), then by grass/brush fires (16). Total MVCs is 7. Only one structure fire.

8) Committee Reports

a. By-Laws – n/a

b. Finance – Krista gave a brief report and will meet with Rod who is taking over from Terry.

c. Conference – Krista Dove –The conference was a great success, what is clear is that we need more space to accommodate growth. Greg Jones asked for motion for approval to find another location and sign a contract for a new venue for the 2026 FSANS conference.

Motion: Moved by Ken Stuebing and seconded by George Larry Varin to find a new venue for the 2026 FSANS conference and obtain a contract for same. **Motion Carried.**

d. Vehicle Insurance Levy – Dave Sponagle –It has been a busy 2 months. My report was distributed with an overview of financial transactions. Terry Canning sent letter to minister of finance for consideration to double levy to increase the revenue stream. Terry received a request for a letter of support for another potential provider to extend coverage in the eastern part of the province. Terry cannot disclose the company name at this time. Kathyrn suggested have department pictures during levy held courses for Facebook and tagging FSANS would gauge interest.

Motion: Moved by Robert MacPherson and seconded by George Derabbie to accept the VILF financial report as presented. **Motion Carried.**

e. TIR – Daniel Gaudet – Daniel sent regrets and there is no report.

f. Resolutions – Nick Power – Resolution Discussion – Legislative Amendment: Blue Emergency Vehicle Lighting (Nova Scotia) We met to discuss the new resolution concerning a legislative amendment in Nova Scotia that would allow the use of blue emergency vehicle lighting. The committee drafted a proposal, which Krista circulated via email. We've already begun receiving feedback and suggestions for revisions, which we greatly appreciate. These comments will help strengthen the resolution as we move forward.

Motion: Moved by Nick Power and seconded by Dave Sponagle to accept the resolutions report. **Motion Carried.**

g. Standards - Terry MacAloney – The committee has been the process of updating the interior and exterior Firefighters standards. We are working on Support, exterior and interior roles. We should have some drafts for the review soon. If you have any ideas or questions for the committee to let us know.

Motion: Moved by Terry MacAloney and seconded by Ken Stuebing to accept the standards committee report as presented. **Motion Carried.**

h. Dispatch – Terry Canning – n/a

i. CISM – Wade Jennings – There is not much to report at this time. The last scheduled meeting was postponed due to multiple ongoing debriefings. Kathryn raised a concern regarding a component that

suggests CISM is not effective outside of the firefighter role. Krista will circulate the details of this issue to the group for awareness. There is interest in having a formal statement or documentation on this matter from FSANS. Once finalized, a copy will be shared with all relevant parties.

j. Health & Wellness – Nick Power – Mental Health Toolkit Discussion - We held a meeting to discuss the email from Paul regarding the development of a Mental Health Toolkit. As part of the follow-up, I will be reaching out to CAFC and other organizations to see if they have existing resources or toolkits that we could adapt or reference. We are also continuing to work on gathering information about Chaplain services and exploring training opportunities for becoming a Chaplain. More details will be shared as this progresses.

Motion: Moved by Nick Power and seconded by Terry MacAloney to accept the report. **Motion Carried.**

k. Accreditation Board – John Cunningham – Things are going well and exam results are going out quickly to students and we will continue to do this going forward.

l. Nova Scotia Fire Fighters School – John Cunningham

- The annual meeting was held a few weeks ago with a smaller-than-usual turnout, but a new Executive was successfully elected:
    - **Chair:** Bernie MacKinnon (replacing Preston, who has resigned)
    - **1st Vice-Chair:** Mike Lockett
    - **2nd Vice-Chair:** Lyle Donovan
    - **Secretary:** Mark Pound
    - **Treasurer:** *Vacant at this time*
- A Value for Money audit is being proposed to review the governance structure of the training school, focusing on how the provincial government can assist in ensuring the school is operating effectively.
    - The audit would be funded by the provincial government.
    - The goal is to ensure proper structure and governance for long-term sustainability.
    - The school plans to work closely with government representatives to move this forward.
    - Counties that have not yet reappointed or returned board members are encouraged to do so promptly.
- The Executive Committee is also undertaking a bylaw review to ensure they are current and reflective of modern governance standards. Updates are expected soon.
- Training programs are running very successfully:
    - Courses are fully booked through to October, including both regular and levy-funded classes.
    - Strong registration and participation signal a continued high demand for training.
- Aside from these developments, it is business as usual, with the organization continuing to serve the needs of fire departments across the province.

m. Medical First Responders – Rod Nielsen

- There has been no new meeting since the last report, which included a detailed update.
- The only new development is the involvement of Mike Lockett, who has been a valuable advocate on behalf of the fire service.

    - Mike has uncovered several key items that are helping move the Long Service Awards program forward, and things are looking very positive in terms of progress.
- Regarding the postal strike, all departments should have received instructions from Mike on how to submit documentation and materials during the disruption.

n. Director to CAFC –Nick Power – The Great Canadian Fire Census is Back!

It was released on May 12 and will be running until the extended deadline of June 20, 2025. All departments are asked to submit their data as of April 30, 2025, or for the most recent 12-month reporting cycle. Please ensure only one response per department is submitted. We encourage you to reach out to members in your county and make sure the census is completed. It's essential every department participates—the more data we collect, the more effective and representative our insights will be.

Federal Election Update – Key Takeaways for CAFC

Mardith and Reese from Summa Strategies provided an overview of the federal election results and their implications for the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC):

- With a new government in place, it is more important than ever for CAFC to cut through the noise and capture the attention of key decision-makers.
- Prime Minister Mark Carney has announced that his government will not table a federal budget until the fall. This provides an extended window to engage with new ministers and parliamentarians to socialize CAFC's priorities.
- A number of key cabinet portfolios have changed, presenting both opportunities and challenges in advancing CAFC's policy objectives. Re-engaging with ministerial staff will be critical to ensure continuity in our advocacy efforts.
- PM Carney has emphasized a desire to govern efficiently and effectively, particularly in responding to crises. The immediate challenge for CAFC will be to align our asks with the government's top priorities, including:

✔ Canada–U.S. relations
✔ Affordability
✔ Economic stability and growth

The CAFC conference is in Winnipeg this September. Nick Power made a motion for the association to cover his costs for the flight, hotel etc., to attend the CAFC conference.

Motion: Moved by Mark Bettens, seconded by George Derabbie, to cover costs to send Nick Power to the CAFC conference in September. **Motion Carried.**

Motion: Moved by Nick Power, seconded by Wade Jennings, to accept the CAFC Report. **Motion Carried.**

o. Director to MFCA – Nick Power – The 2025 Atlantic Fire Leadership Conference will take place at Credit Union Place in Summerside, PEI July 3-6, 2025. Conference theme is Leading Through a Changing World!

Motion: Moved by Nick Power, seconded by Robert MacPherson, to accept the Director to the MFCA's Report. **Motion Carried.**

p. DNR – Greg Jones

- Greg inquired about any issues that have arisen in the region this year but is still waiting for responses, particularly regarding rates.
- A resolution has been made for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a Structural Support Unit (SSU) within the department.
- Ken noted that governance remains a central challenge. He mentioned he will be taking possession of two SSUs this summer, along with the QSAR (Quick Strike Assessment and Response) team.
- The FSANS discussions continue to connect with the Regional Emergency Management Office (EMO) strategy.
- An upcoming meeting, scheduled in about a month, will focus on short-term EMO planning. One key agenda item is exploring the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for deployment processes.
- The goal is to develop a clear, streamlined process for activating and deploying SSUs efficiently. Greg will follow up and coordinate discussions to advance this initiative.

q. **Fire Marshal** – Doug MacKenzie

- **Service Medal Delivery:**
  Potential mail disruptions may affect the delivery of service medals, similar to previous occurrences.
  - Due to union restrictions, unionized staff cannot be used to deliver medals; only management or couriers are permitted.
  - As a result, some delays in medal distribution are expected.
- **Capstone Consultant & REM System:**
  Capstone has been hired as a consultant for the Records and Emergency Management (REM) system, identified as Priority 1 by the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM).
  - Meetings are underway to initiate the project with compressed timelines.
  - Further updates will be provided at the September meeting.
- **Municipal Engagement:**
  Senior leadership will be conducting a municipal roadshow to engage with local officials.
  - Feedback indicates concerns about OFM's communication, specifically around fire investigations and notification of OFM's presence at scenes.
  - Departments experiencing issues are encouraged to contact Doug directly for assistance.
- **Local Assistance Training:**
  Additional training sessions are planned for September.
  - If your department requires this training, please reach out to Chelsea to coordinate.
  - It is recommended that senior officers participate every five years, and that new officers attend as well.
  - Although there have been few changes to the Fire Safety Act, the training provides important updates and useful program tweaks.

- **Introductory Fire Investigation Program:**
  A new introductory investigation program is being rolled out, with updates scheduled for September.
    - While not currently mandatory, attendance is strongly recommended to enhance departmental capabilities.

s. Governance Committee – Daniel Gaudet - n/a

t. Communications – Nick Power – n/a

u. Nominations Committee – Daniel Gaudet – n/a

v. Joint Municipal Fire Service Review – Rod Nielsen

- No meeting has been held recently due to member availability.
- Emphasis remains on completing the overall governance review first.
- In the meantime, some members are working behind the scenes to advance key tasks related to the review.
- There is a possibility of scheduling a meeting before the end of June to assess progress and review governance developments to date.

10. Correspondence – Grainger Email Update – Katrina King

- Katrina King from Grainger shared information about programs available through Canoe Purchasing Group, aimed at expanding their business reach.
- The question was raised: How many municipalities currently have purchasing agreements and use these programs?
- Paul G noted that his municipality is exploring these options, and Terry MacAloney confirmed that Enfield is also looking into it.
- Krista will circulate Katrina King's correspondence from Grainger to all members for review and consideration.

Research Request Update

- A fire service member who is pursuing a PhD in psychology has submitted a research request.
- Greg is scheduled to meet with him in June to discuss the project further.
- If the president has met with the researcher or if any developments occur, these will be reported at the September Board of Directors meeting.
- Additionally, Greg has received a request for another research project, which he will review to determine its relevance and potential value.

Munn Insurance Partnership Discussion

- **Background:**
  Munn Insurance recently used our logo in their presentation and is seeking to become a partner

with FSANS. They are asking for permission to use the logo and are interested in supporting various programs.

- **Current Considerations:**
    - The information regarding this request has been sent to Krista for distribution to all members.
    - It was clarified that vendors can be associate members but are not eligible to hold a board position.
    - The CAFC (Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs) has an existing relationship with Munn personnel, providing members with relevant information and benefits.
- **Key Questions:**
    - What is the value of entering a partnership with Munn Insurance compared to existing relationships like CAFC?
    - What data or evidence supports the value proposition of working with Munn?
- **Board Input:**
    - Ken raised the point of whether FSANS has a committee or process to vet vendors.
    - If FSANS wants to pursue potential revenue opportunities, there should be a formal process, possibly including tenders, to identify and select partners.
    - Greg agreed that having a committee to oversee use of the FSANS logo and vendor partnerships would be beneficial, noting this is not the first time the logo has been used without clear oversight.
    - Ken emphasized the need for a framework to guide decision-making, especially in the absence of dedicated staff, with revenue generation as a key consideration.
    - Rod echoed the need for sustainable revenue streams beyond membership dues to support the organization's growing workload and effectiveness at both provincial and municipal levels.
- **Next Steps:**
  Greg will consider and develop ideas around forming a committee or framework to manage vendor relationships, logo use, and potential revenue streams, and will share these thoughts with the board.

Governance Review Update

Over the next few months, there will be a lot of activity focused on governance, particularly throughout July and August. We recognize this falls during the popular summer vacation period, but it's important to engage as many voices as possible to ensure the work gets completed.

This is a key opportunity to refresh our data and develop a sustainable governance document that we can move forward with confidently. Accurate data and clear evidence of its sources will be crucial to support the process and outcomes.

11. Adjournment – Motion to adjourn at 2:00 pm

Next Meeting – September 28th - 10:00 am Brookfield – in person and good attendance is requested.