



# OPFFA

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ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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August 25, 2009

Mr. Peter Hume, President  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)  
200 University Ave., Suite 801  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5H 3C6

Dear President Hume:

Congratulations on your re-election to President of AMO. I write to you today over a matter of serious concern for professional fire fighters across Ontario and across Canada.

Fire fighters, like other front line emergency responders, are not currently in the first group of Canadians who would receive available antivirals and vaccines in the event of a flu pandemic, whether it is the current H1N1 pandemic or a future pandemic caused by avian or some other influenza type.

Independent analysis conducted (attached) recently has concluded that without appropriate precautions, **25 to 30 per cent of full-time fire fighters could be unavailable for duty in the event of a flu pandemic.** This would be a disaster for public safety in Ontario. Fire fighting is a labour-intensive operation that requires an adequate number of personnel available in order to adequately protect the public. A fire department cannot function normally and provide adequate protection to the public with this many personnel unavailable. The resulting risk to public safety would be unimaginable let alone the financial impact on municipalities.

We need front line fire fighters and other emergency responders to be healthy and ready to respond on a daily basis and in particular during a health crisis event.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has written an open letter (attached) to the Federal Health Minister calling on her to amend the current policy to assist municipalities to better protect critical front-line workers. As well, our National representative Mr. Jim Lee of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) has written to the Federal Health Minister seeking similar amendments.

www.opffa.org

An Association Run For and By The Membership  
Affiliated with the International Association of Fire Fighters and the Ontario Federation of Labour



I have copied you on my communication to Ontario's Minister of Health, the Hon David Caplan. I have requested Minister Caplan that notwithstanding the Federal Government's plan that Ontario take the lead and address this gap in protecting its fire fighters and front line emergency responders.

I am requesting your support in this effort. I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss this matter further. In the meantime do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred LeBlanc', written over the typed name and title.

Fred LeBlanc,  
President

Cc: Hon Dalton McGuinty, Premier  
Hon Rick Bartolucci, Minister of Community Safety & Correctional services  
Hon David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Mr. Pat Burke, Ontario Fire Marshal  
Mr. Richard Boyes, President, Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs  
Mr. Jim Lee, IAFF Canada  
Mr. Bruce Carpenter, IAFF 13<sup>th</sup> DVP