ALBERTA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

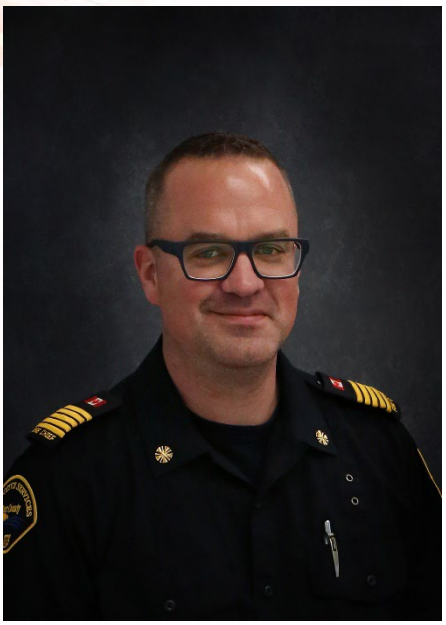
Strategic Plan

2026 – 2030

Advancing Fire Service Leadership Across Alberta

Strategic Planning Session facilitated by Nolan Crouse, MBA, CCMP™

Message from the President



To the Members of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my honour to present the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association 2026–2030 Strategic Plan. This plan was developed through a facilitated strategic planning session with the Board of Directors and reflects the insights, priorities, and aspirations of our membership.

The delivery of fire service in Alberta continues to evolve. We face growing demands on our members — from increasing emergency call volumes and staffing pressures, to the mental health and wellness challenges confronting Chief Officers and firefighters across the province. You need the AFCA to be stronger and more responsive than ever before.

This plan is built around three clear priorities: Member Engagement and Value, Organizational Strength and Sustainability, and Advocacy. It is sensible, achievable, and designed to deliver lasting value to every member of our Association.

I encourage you to stay engaged — reach out to your Regional Director, Director at Large, or any member of the Executive. Together, we will continue to foster and build the best fire service network in Canada.

Respectfully,

Chief Drayton Bussiere
President, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association

About the AFCA

The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association is committed to promoting and representing leaders of the fire service. We focus on committed service excellence, support, and professional leadership of the fire service in Alberta. The AFCA serves as an advocate on behalf of the fire service and as the resource for fire service leaders — providing a unified voice for fire departments in communities of all sizes across Alberta.

Established in 1948, the AFCA has grown to represent over 700 members across more than 400 organizations, bringing together more than 6,000 years of collective fire service experience.

Mission

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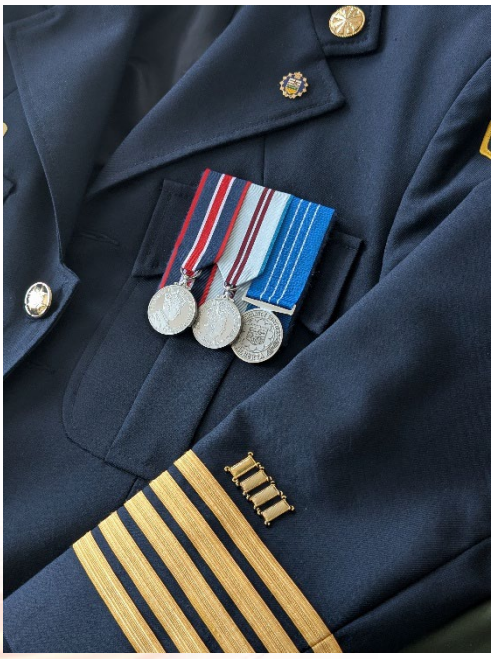
> ***To support, connect, and collaborate with fire service leaders across Alberta.***

Vision

> ***The AFCA is the recognized advocate for the Alberta fire service leaders.***

Values

- Excellence — Upholding the highest standards in fire service leadership and member support
- Integrity — Operating with transparency, accountability, and trust in all we do
- Collaboration — Partnering with members, government, and stakeholders to achieve shared goals
- Innovation — Embracing forward-thinking solutions to meet the evolving needs of Alberta's fire service
- Safety — Championing the safety and well-being of firefighters, first responders, and the public



Environmental Scan: S.W.O.T. Analysis

The Board of Directors conducted a comprehensive S.W.O.T. analysis during the strategic planning session. Consistent with the Crouse strategic management framework: Strengths are to be celebrated, nurtured, and exploited; Weaknesses are to be defined with strategies to overcome; Opportunities are to be defined with strategies to pursue; and Threats are to be defined with strategies to mitigate their impact or probability of occurrence.

STRENGTHS

- Recognized voice for Alberta fire service leadership at provincial and federal levels
- Strengthened Executive Director position with regional presence
- More united membership — improved urban/rural engagement
- Successful committees producing legacy items (e.g., Core Competency Framework)
- Established Provincial Fire Services Liaison Committee
- Strong, cohesive Board with open and honest governance
- Improved financial management including budgeting and forecasting
- Growing conference recognized as a premier annual event
- Strong government relationships — accessible at all levels of provincial government
- Improved website, AFCA app, and Bookstore

WEAKNESSES

- Some committees underperforming due to declining volunteer participation
- Not every fire department in Alberta is an AFCA member
- Competition for sponsor and supplier discretionary dollars
- Alberta has no Provincial Fire Legislation — an ongoing policy gap
- Chiefs' time constraints reduce engagement in volunteer roles

OPPORTUNITIES

- Multi-year and discounted membership models to grow stability
- Online Bookstore subscription programs
- Legal support network for fire chiefs facing municipal challenges
- Provincial advocacy for funding to support volunteer member conference attendance
- Training integration at the annual conference (e.g., tabletop exercises, IMS)
- Core competency tool subscription or fee model
- Board diversity enhancement for richer perspectives
- Education for members on mutual aid, ICF agreements, and shared services

THREATS

- Limited and concentrated revenue streams (Bookstore and membership dependency)
- Conference attendance variability based on geography and travel costs
- Economic pressures — tariffs, cross-border costs affecting department budgets
- Tightening sponsor and supplier budgets
- Volunteer capacity challenges for Board and committee participation
- Future viability concerns for the Bookstore (Canadian dollar, tariffs)
- Municipal support for chiefs' memberships not guaranteed

Strategic Directions

Strategic directions define what the AFCA wants to focus on over the 2026–2030 period. All goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics flow from these three directions identified by the Board.

Member Engagement & Value

Increase membership and deliver services seen by members as valued

Organizational Strength & Sustainability

Ensure governance, financial, and administrative capacity to serve members long term

Advocacy

Advance the reputation and relevance of AFCA as the voice of the fire service

Outcomes, Goals & Objectives

The following goals and objectives express the aspirations of the AFCA under each strategic direction. Objectives are specific targets to be accomplished within the 2026–2030 timeframe. Strategies are the means by which those objectives will be achieved.

A. MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND VALUE

Goal:

To increase membership and deliver services seen by members as valued.

Strategies:

- Investigate incentive policies and processes to reward membership renewal
- Implement auto-renewal functionality on the AFCA membership site
- Explore multi-year membership options with discounts
- Offer free first-year membership for brand new Fire Chiefs
- Identify fire departments not currently members and develop targeted outreach
- Review Trade memberships and referral processes
- Improve website experience and actively promote membership benefits
- Explore a legal support network for fire chiefs facing municipal challenges
- Expand digital and online Bookstore offerings and subscriptions
- Diversify and increase Lunch and Learn programming
- Develop one- or two-day member symposiums with member and non-member pricing
- Explore conference expansion including integrated training opportunities

B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Goal:

To ensure AFCA has the governance, financial foundation, administrative capacity, and member engagement to serve its members long term.

Strategies:

- Explore an online 50/50 fundraising model (e.g., modelled on the Nova Scotia approach)
- Diversify revenue streams beyond membership fees and the Bookstore
- Diversify conference offerings to broaden appeal and revenue
- Strengthen Chief Officer training and support programming
- Review staff capacity to ensure alignment with organizational needs
- Review investment and reserve fund policies
- Review bylaws on an annual basis — no concerns with current bylaws at this time
- Establish committee structure following the approval of this strategic plan

C. ADVOCACY

Goal:

To advance the reputation and relevance of the AFCA by promoting and strengthening the voice of the fire service.

Strategies

- Provide educational sessions for chiefs on how to advocate with councils and local government
- Train chiefs and Board members on presenting effectively to elected officials
- Evaluate the value and impact of the current AFCA lobbyist
- Assess and strengthen interactions with Alberta Municipalities and Rural Municipalities of Alberta
- Build relationships with other associations nationally (e.g., CAFC, chiefs of police, unions)
- Increase AFCA presence at key association events (e.g., booth at Alberta Municipalities and RMA)
- Executive Director to develop relationships with Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers
- Increase social media visibility and develop a marketing strategy for internal and external audiences
- Provide supporting data (e.g., remuneration benchmarking) to strengthen advocacy positions
- Work toward changes in the Municipal Government Act regarding fire safety services
- Assist chiefs in developing council briefing notes and accessing relevant data
- Report publicly on the advocacy work and outcomes delivered by the AFCA

Conclusion

The AFCA's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan represents a shared commitment by the Board of Directors, staff, and members to build a stronger, more sustainable, and more impactful organization for Alberta's fire service community.

As Nolan Crouse reminds us: "A vision without a plan is just a dream — and a plan without a vision is drudgery." This strategic plan is both: a clear vision for where the AFCA is headed, and a practical roadmap for how we will get there together.

The challenges facing our fire service — from fiscal pressures and governance complexity, to recruitment, retention, and the mental health of our members — are real. But so are our strengths. With a united Board, a strong staff team, deep government relationships, and a growing conference, the AFCA is well positioned to lead.

> ***Together, we will continue to foster and build the best fire service network in Canada.***

For more information, please visit www.afca.ca