



Background material and plan
for a transition of FireSmart
to CIFFC

Contents

Introduction 2

PHASE ONE..... 3

 Strengthening CIFFC’s Ability to Expand 3

 Canadian Mitigation and Prevention Strategy 4

 Developing the Strategy..... 5

 Outcomes from the Strategy 5

 Implementation of the Strategy 6

Transfer of FireSmart Canada from Partners in Protection to CIFFC..... 6

Phase Two 8

Introduction

Partners in Protection was formed in the early 1990s by fire professionals who recognized the growing wildfire risk to homes and communities in the wildland / urban interface. Partners in Protection members have worked diligently, volunteered time and energy to develop a wildfire resiliency program. The FireSmart program has grown to be widely recognized and respected but the potential of the program has been limited by a lack of capacity and sustainable funding.

During the summer of 2019, Partners in Protection directors met to develop a strategic plan that outlined a vision to reduce the wildfire risk to property, infrastructure, and public safety in the Canadian wildland / urban interface by helping communities live resiliently with wildfire. Unpredictable program funding and the limited national reach of the FireSmart program were identified as key challenges.

In March of this year, the Partners in Protection board of directors met in Edmonton to discuss the strategic direction of FireSmart. At the March meeting a proposal was presented by the co-chair of the Wildland Fire Management Working Group to have the FireSmart brand and programs transferred to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) under a new initiative to broaden the mandate of CIFFC to include wildfire prevention and mitigation.

The Partners in Protection board of directors identified winning conditions to be satisfied in any agreement with CIFFC. These are: a governance model that includes a mechanism to incorporate the views and perspectives of a broad collective of external partners; the program continues to remain true to the original 7 disciplines of FireSmart; and that a transition to CIFFC maintain a strong and effective FireSmart brand maintaining established brand use guidelines.

Based on the winning conditions and through ongoing discussions with CIFFC this transition plan has been developed. After almost 30 years and several boards of directors, Partners in Protection has the potential to make the FireSmart message truly national in scope. Although the move to CIFFC is an exciting opportunity, it will result in the windup and dissolution of the Partners in Protection Association, with the future responsibility of delivering a national FireSmart program resting with CIFFC

The parties involved have a deep interest in further building on the success of the FireSmart program to benefit residents and communities across Canada.

While Partners in Protection has been building the FireSmart brand, other initiatives have been in the works.

In 2019, Public Safety Canada released *The Emergency Management Strategy for Canada: Toward a Resilient 2030* (Emergency Management Strategy). FireSmart disciplines – Education, Emergency Planning, Interagency Cooperation, Cross Training, Vegetation Management, Development, and Legislation – are strong components of the priority areas identified in the Emergency Management Strategy¹:

- Priority 1: Enhance whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience
- Priority 2: Improve understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society
- Priority 3: Increase focus on whole-of-society disaster prevention and mitigation activities
- Priority 4: Enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster the development of new capabilities

¹ <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mrgncy-mngmnt-strtg/index-en.aspx>

- Priority 5: Strengthen recovery efforts by building back better to minimize the impacts of future disasters

The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) has recognized the need to transform wildland fire management to prevent and mitigate increasing wildfire threats and risks. This transformation is founded with a whole-of-government approach that will incorporate all pillars of emergency management. The *Canadian Wildland Fire Strategy* (CWFS 2005, 2016) remains the source of strategic national direction, and efforts are aligned with the Emergency Management Strategy.

In 2019, the CCFM endorsed a set of recommendations presented in *Priority Actions for Increasing Wildland Fire Resiliency in Canada* (Resiliency Report), which outlined a comprehensive series of strategies and activities to enable transformation of wildland fire management in Canada. The Resiliency Report included specific recommendations to develop options to enhance the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) and to increase focus on risk reduction by prioritizing prevention and mitigation efforts. The Resiliency Report also reinforced the critical role FireSmart Canada should play in national efforts for risk reduction.

The work outlined in the mandate expansion is divided into two phases, and will include a robust progress reporting schedule to ensure that direction from the CIFFC board of directors is received at regular intervals (at a minimum, quarterly).

The mandate expansion was approved by the CCFM on Sept. 16, 2020.

PHASE ONE

Strengthening CIFFC's ability to expand

In phase one, CIFFC will strengthen its core governance and management structure, which will allow the organization to effectively take a lead role in mitigation and prevention and deliver high-quality results. Particular attention will be paid to ensuring CIFFC does not accept responsibility for mitigation and prevention (and FireSmart Canada) without the ability to support and deliver on the accompanying mandate. This component of phase one will be completed by Nov. 30, 2020.

A corporate-services function will be created to align CIFFC's structure in order to equally support the current mandate of preparedness and response and the new mandates of mitigation and prevention. Creating this new division will ensure delivery is not favoured in one key pillar area over another.

CIFFC's financial management system will be strengthened to allow the continued acceptance of grants and contributions from various sources. This will also ensure CIFFC's ability to meet the sometimes-onerous reporting requirements associated with contribution agreements.

CIFFC will recruit and add a fully bilingual communications officer to manage all communication requirements for CIFFC and its many components. A dedicated communications officer will also ensure a strong social and mainstream media presence for CIFFC and including FireSmart Canada.

CIFFC's information management abilities will be strengthened to ensure it can meet critical data storage and management requirements. This will further guarantee that the many websites under CIFFC (e.g. FireSmart Canada, ICS Canada, ciffc.ca, etc.) will be robust, modern, bilingual, and well maintained.

CIFFC's information technology (IT) abilities will be strengthened to ensure it can meet the IT requirements of new staff and associates delivering its current and new mandated areas. Critical infrastructure with reliable back up and support systems will be secured in order to preserve historic data.

CIFFC will strengthen its project-management system to ensure all projects are structured with appropriate tracking, reporting and accountability.

In consultation with PiP, CIFFC will create a **FireSmart Canada Advisory Committee** whose mandate will be to ensure the FireSmart Canada brand and associated standards and products sustain qualities of technical excellence and continuous improvement. This advisory committee is expected to comprise 12 members, more or less, and will directly advise CIFFC's board of directors. Members may be drawn from any order of government (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, Indigenous), private sector, not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions, or individuals with recognized expertise.

As a global leader, CIFFC strives to foster a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion. Maintenance of this culture will be kept in mind at all times and fully incorporated by CIFFC as it moves forward with each phase of the strategy.

Canadian Mitigation and Prevention Strategy

In phase one, a Canadian mitigation and prevention strategy will be developed for CCFM approval by September 2021. To prepare for the development of this strategy, a Framework for a National Wildland Fire Prevention and Mitigation Strategy (framework) was approved by the CCFM during its Sept. 16, 2020, meeting. The framework will contribute to the transformation of wildland fire management in Canada by adopting a whole-of-government approach as Canadian wildland fire agencies transition from a forestry-centered perspective. The strategy will be grounded in risk reduction, aligned with the emergency management pillars (mitigation, preparation, response and recovery) and consider climate change adaptation, forest health, economic sustainability, and Indigenous reconciliation.

The defining elements outline how this national strategy differs from the provincial and territorial work conducted thus far. The strategy will:

- Provide a mechanism for integration among various federal, provincial and territorial forums that have bearings on wildland fire management such as public safety, parks, environment, infrastructure, Indigenous affairs, and others.
- Establish a dedicated leadership structure to enable collaboration internationally, domestically, and regionally.
- Allow for position statements at the national level and the development of standards that will reinforce provincial and territorial strategies and whole-of-society participation.
- Include Indigenous partners throughout development, creation and implementation.
- Establish a coordinated approach to deliver FireSmart guidelines to stakeholders across Canada.
- Incorporate community and land management wildfire risk reduction strategies that apply to both crown and private land at the landscape, local and site level.

The strategy will be shaped by consideration for the broader topics of disaster risk reduction and the potential for integration and collaboration with other national and international entities. The strategy will support research programs aimed at improving wildland fire prevention and mitigation efficiencies to demonstrate the socioeconomic benefits of FireSmart principles and practices.

Developing the strategy

The timeline set forward by CIFFC to deliver the Canadian Mitigation and Prevention Strategy is ambitious. The goal is to receive final approval by the CCFM in September 2021. To achieve this, the strategy first needs to be approved by the CIFFC board of directors by March 31, 2021, and deputy ministers in July 2021.

To facilitate this ambitious timeline, CIFFC is developing a steering committee with members from CIFFC's current mitigation and prevention committee, FireSmart Canada, and external stakeholders. This committee will have dedicated leadership and secretariat support, and will guide the work of external consultants retained to develop the strategy. The committee will report directly to the CIFFC management committee² and engage a broad range of external stakeholders and subject-matter experts while also ensuring input well beyond the wildland community.

Outcomes from the strategy

The framework sets out the following expected outcomes from the strategy:

Collaboration, integration, and partnerships

- Prevention and mitigation initiatives are collectively coordinated and implemented across provinces, territories, and federal member agencies.
- Prevention and mitigation are formally integrated into Canadian emergency management through coordination with Public Safety Canada's F/P/T table, Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management (SOREM) and Wildland Fire Management Working Group (WFMWG)
- Integration of FireSmart Canada into CIFFC and the national strategy as a cost-effective way to expand FireSmart initiatives in an effective and consistent manner.

Wildfire risk reduction

- Economic and social impacts of wildland fires are decreased by improvements in the resiliency of communities and infrastructures, reduction in the frequency and intensity of catastrophic interface wildland fire events, and increase in effective recovery post fire.
- Investments are risk based, prioritized and rationalized, as well as the potential for CIFFC to distribute funds on behalf of the national wildland fire community.
- Preparedness and response capabilities are improved by providing standardized methodology, systems, modeling, and tools to understand and inform risk-based decisions.

Shared responsibility

- Improved confidence and trust of the public through engagement, education and communications.
- Shared responsibility is entrenched, and the participation of the public, stakeholders and governments is increased.
- Cost efficiencies are realized over time by limiting the duplication of efforts, sharing of information and best practices, and streamlined program development and execution.

Healthy and resilient forests

² CIFFC's Management Committee is composed of Directors responsible for wildfire management within the 13 member agencies, as well as Quebec's SOPFEU, Parks Canada, DND, and CIFFC's Executive Director

- Canada's forest health is increased through effective use of prevention and mitigation efforts and increasing public acceptance of the necessity and benefits of prescribed fire

Implementation of the strategy

The framework states "In preparation for implementation, CIFFC will develop a detailed workplan including the primary components, activities, timing and resourcing for the transition and development of the strategy. CIFFC will define a collaboration model that details the consultation, engagement and governance models proposed to advance integration and develop the strategy."

CIFFC's mandate expansion began with an effort to assume full staffing needs for all of CIFFC's future mandate. After some reflection, member agencies felt it was presumptuous to assume what CIFFC's role and resource requirements would be in the area of mitigation and prevention without an informed national strategy. The strategy will be expected to identify all staffing and other resources required for successful implementation of the strategy, and the future management and delivery of FireSmart Canada.

To facilitate the development of the strategy and the transfer of assets from PiP to CIFFC, a director of mitigation and prevention, and an associated administrative assistant will be recruited by CIFFC as soon as possible.

Transfer of FireSmart Canada from Partners in Protection to CIFFC

Assuming that all of PiP's assets, including financial, will be transferred to CIFFC, the current FireSmart Canada goals, projects, and issues will be addressed by CIFFC as follows:

Staffing

The current FireSmart Canada executive director will fill the new role of CIFFC director of mitigation and prevention with the current Partners in Protection business manager filling the mitigation and prevention administrative assistant role. The communications and technical advisor roles are currently delivered through contracts and these will be maintained or renegotiated with CIFFC. The hire of current FireSmart staff by CIFFC will allow for a seamless transition of the program support and the operation of ongoing projects. This continuity of FireSmart operations and continued progress on the 2020 workplan has been an important consideration of the PiP board during discussions.

With the current PiP executive director moving to CIFFC, the Partners in Protection board will hire an interim executive director to coordinate the windup of the Partners in Protection Association.

Organizational initiatives

- Coordinate development of a National FireSmart license and brand use agreement

This project is expected to take several months to complete. Using associated funding transferred from PiP, CIFFC will maintain a contract with Wally Born to continue leadership and finalize delivery with this committee.

- Implement a technical review team

Using associated funding transferred from PiP, CIFFC will engage Kelly Johnston to ascertain his interest in continuing to lead this project under CIFFC.

- Support FireSmart Canada website updating as required

CIFFC will commit to maintaining the FireSmart Canada website and explore the possibilities of translating the site into French.

- Coordinate Wildfire Community Preparedness Day

CIFFC will commit to maintaining the current plan for 2021 Wildfire Community Preparedness Day.

Homeowner

- Continue to develop the Home Partners Program of home assessments including a Phase 2 pilot in BC and a quantitative assessment with Alberta

CIFFC understands that this phase 2 pilot is funded by a grant with the Intact Centre for Climate Adaption and led by Kelly Johnson. CIFFC will commit to continuing this work, providing the appropriate guidance and feedback where requested.

- Initiate development of online training modules

Using associated funding transferred from PiP, and working through its experienced training section, CIFFC will commit to working with partners to initiate the development of these online modules.

Neighbourhood

- Complete the Local FireSmart Representative update and implement changes.
- Implement name change to FireSmart Neighbourhood Recognition Program and coordinate the new online program application and annual renewal process.
- Complete the FireSmart Neighbourhood Recognition Program video series highlighting successful FireSmart Neighbourhood Recognition Program participants from across Canada.

CIFFC understands that this project is approximately 90 per cent complete and, using the original grant funding, commits to ensure full delivery as per the original grant requirement.

Community

- Further development of criteria and program development of a Community Achievement Award

Using associated funding transferred from PiP, CIFFC will commit to retaining Wally Born to lead the committee discussing the award criteria and ensure the foundations of the award are strong. Once established, CIFFC will work with local governments to secure future funding and coordination of the award.

- Coordinate the printing and distribution of the Indigenous FireSmart Booklet

CIFFC will commit to delivering this project including the printing and distribution of the booklet with already identified funding.

FireSmart Canada on the horizon

- Media tool kit

Working with the Cooperators Group and using the associated funding, CIFFC will commit to continue the development of the media tool kit in both of Canada's official languages. CIFFC's communications manager and contracted assistance will be required.

Two standing committees and one task teams

- Standing Committee Provincial and Territorial FireSmart Liaisons – recommendations on national standards

Using associated funding transferred from PiP, CIFFC will commit to maintaining Wally Born as lead of this committee and ensuring discussions are fed into the development of the Canadian mitigation and prevention strategy.

- Standing Committee Technical Review Team – provide advice on technical issues and adoption of new research

Using associated funding transferred from PiP, CIFFC will commit to engaging Kelly Johnston and ascertain his desire to continue to lead this team under CIFFC contract. The role of this team will be reviewed as it pertains to CIFFC's fire science committee.

- Task team for Volunteer Fire Service Engagement

CIFFC will commit to a joint review of the future role of CIFFC and FireSmart Canada with the volunteer fire service, the benefits to both parties, and how best to maintain a productive relationship.

Phase Two

The CCFM will be presented with the recommendations for phase two of CIFFC's mandate expansion at its September 2021 meeting.

In the phase two request to CCFM, the board of directors will seek approval for implementation of the national wildland fire prevention and mitigation strategy. Recommendations to further expand the scope of CIFFC's services related to prevention and mitigation are anticipated, with details to be determined during development of the strategy. An ongoing organizational structure and associated funding will be established.

- Establish permanent organizational structure, internal capacity, and funding requirements.
- Implement national prevention and mitigation strategy.