



A Message from the Executive Director:



Kudos to Jim Murphy for suggesting that Partners in Protection begin the publication of a periodic newsletter. This is a great way to inform people about the Association, create interest and encourage future input to the FireSmart Canada Program. It is also a great way for us to be able to show our supporting sponsors and members how their membership fees and generous donations are contributing to the National FireSmart effort.

When Jim asked me to provide an article for the newsletter I thought of Partners first attempt at producing a newsletter. I found an original copy, which I believe may have been a series of one, published in September, 1995. Hopefully this one will continue on a regular basis. A quote from the President's message at that time, "Partners in Protection is currently in a state of self-examination and transition. The need to review our goals, functions and structure is the result of requests from those of you who attended our symposium as well as the result of changes that are occurring in all public agencies." Another article goes on to say, "There is consensus that Partners in Protection should continue, and remain as a leading organization bringing together interagency involvement, focusing efforts at the community and local levels, and eventually pursuing a national scope."

Well, here we are nearly 18 years later and we are back at the same juncture. We have come a long way during these years with many accomplishments that we can be proud of including; achieving a national scope and now focusing efforts at the community level with the FireSmart Communities Program. The Association is at that cross roads again. We are in the process of adopting new bylaws, a new business plan and perhaps new governance. There is an opportunity now to develop a new national FireSmart strategy; a national organization working at arm's length from government with the ability to raise funds, form partnerships and selectively endorse and market programs and products including the FireSmart brand.

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In my opinion there have been some failures along the way as well:

1. Loss of participation and support from municipal and structural fire and emergency services. Structural fire and emergency services seem reluctant to accept responsibility for wildland/urban interface fire mitigation. Wildland fire management agencies cannot continue to carry the load without municipal support.
2. Inability to garner recognition and support from the federal government (other than the Canadian Forest Service). The federal government would rather spend millions of dollars on evacuating communities and recovery after the fire than spending a few dollars up front to reduce the risk and help mitigate the results of a disaster.
3. Lack of Corporate sponsorship.
4. Lack of focus for national emergency management programs to promote and encourage action by municipalities and communities to act on one of the key phases of emergency management "Mitigation".

Organizations across Canada are good at managing the Preparedness, Response and Recovery phases of emergency management. However we always seem to fall short of trying to implement the first phase of emergency management "Mitigation" with goals to stop the incident from occurring in the first place. Partners in Protection Canada could lead this charge and work with government, industry, communities and the public to encourage the implementation of FireSmart activities as a mitigation process that is designed to reduce or eliminate risks to persons or property or to lessen the actual or potential effects or consequences of an incident.

More effort must be placed in overcoming these issues if the Association is to be truly successful.

Our program is ready to move forward to meet the demands for the next 18 years. We have a brand new website that is continually evolving to meet the needs of all of our members across Canada. Our Board of Directors has expanded to include various representations from different provinces and territories and private business. We have secured international support from NFPA and the Firewise program in the form of a memorandum of agreement on product exchange. Partners in Protection Canada has started to be successful in bringing in corporate interests in the development of the National FireSmart Program that will benefit all.

With all of this new direction it is also time for Partners in Protection to change leadership. The Association needs a full time Executive Director with new ideas, a fresh approach and skilled in fund raising and information technology. I have been involved with Partners in Protection since its inception and it is time to move on. I have tendered my resignation with the Board, effective as of the upcoming AGM. It has been my pleasure to serve and I am confident the Association will continue to be the voice for FireSmart across Canada for many years to come.

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Northwest Territories rolls out first FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Session in Canada



Don Mortimer (right), a BC wildfire consultant, shares some FireSmart tips with Wes Steed, FireSmart coordinator in Fort Smith. (Photo: Renee Francoeur)

A new FireSmart training program designed to encourage citizen groups to fireproof their neighbourhoods has kicked off across Canada, with the first workshops taking place in the Northwest Territories.

Over 30 fire marshals, emergency service personnel, community planners and elders from across the NWT gathered at Aurora College's Thebacha campus in Fort Smith last week for a two-day workshop on how to become involved in the Community Recognition Program and safeguard their homes from wildfires. Wes Steed, Fort Smith's FireSmart coordinator, said, "There's also great co-operation here between the local fire department and ENR, which is a part of FireSmart.

Workshop participants are certified to go back to their communities and give half-day informational sessions teaching others how to take preventive actions and prepare for wildfires before they occur.

The workshop, presented by Partners in Protection, an Alberta-based coalition dedicated to providing information to reduce the risk of wildfire losses, also demonstrated how communities can obtain an official FireSmart recognition status by meeting certain criteria.

To read the entire article by Renee Francoeur follow the link below.

<http://norj.ca/2013/05/new-canadian-firesmart-program-debuts-in-nwt/>

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FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Program in Saskatchewan



Larry Fremont SASK

Saskatchewan's Wildfire Management Branch kicked off the FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Program by hosting a Local FireSmart Representative Workshop in Prince Albert on May 07 – 08th. The workshop was delivered by Don Mortimer and Allan Westhaver. As luck would have it the snow that lingered so long decided to melt that week so many of the people signed up to attend the workshop were back home dealing with flood concerns but we were still able to put 22 people through the workshop.

Initial response from the workshop has been very positive. Course evaluations were very complimentary and there has been a steady trail of additional information requests as the race is on to see who will become the first nationally recognized FireSmart community in Saskatchewan.

The 30 minute Recruiting FireSmart Community Champions presentation was delivered recently with very positive feedback. The Jack Cohen video is always a hit and requests to add the video to a local website or to receive a copy of the video to show at the next cottage owner meeting shows me that these high quality educational resources are well worth the resources and effort to produce.

Saskatchewan is slowly drying out and the potential to have a significant fire season is possible. We started the spring with a couple serious grass fires in the southern part of the province and we are now starting to pick up lightning fires in the north.

Have a good, safe, fire season.

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Media Covers Saskatchewan FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Program



They are helping prevent fire losses for homeowners in forested areas.

The FireSmart Canada Recognition program hosted a two-day course to teach people how to reduce the impact of fires on communities and make them more fire resilient.

“The objective of the program is to reduce the probability of wildfire losses in communities through the actions of the residents themselves working in conjunction with members of the fire community,” said Alan Westhaver, a wild and urban interface consultant with FireSmart Canada.

To read the entire article by Jodi Schellenberg follow the link below.

<http://www.paherald.sk.ca/News/Local/2013-05-07/article-3239689/Helping-prevent-wildfires-from-ruining-homes/1>

Next on the horizon are training sessions to be held in Ontario and Alberta in the fall of 2013.

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Updates from Nova Scotia



It's been a year and a half since Kara McCurdy has been involved in the Fire Prevention program for Natural Resources in Nova Scotia. Kara has been busy outreaching and becoming familiar with the FireSmart program. She has been a welcome addition to the national prevention group and offers up the following excerpts from her journey in the Fire Prevention program.

It has been a busy time for me since I joined the Fire Prevention program. I have completed well over a dozen presentations on the Fire Smart program. My original efforts concentrated on Volunteer firefighters, as these folks will most likely be the target of public questions on the topic. I figured it was fitting to let them in on the efforts to reduce wildfire risk around their own homes and communities. To support this we created a "preplan" which is a form where the volunteer firefighters can either complete an inspection themselves (as some already currently do on larger at risk buildings) or give the form to the public for them to assess their own home and return the information to the fire department. The form covers interior general hazards, whether people need assistance and it ties into the exterior component that rates their home as being low, moderate, high or extreme risk for wildfire impact. They are then given tips to reduce the risks around their home. Recently I extended this program towards woodlot owners in Nova Scotia and how they can help reduce wildfires and wildfire spread into their valuable property and woodlot resources.

Another program that I am excited about is working with Scouts Canada to create a "FireSmart" badge for scouts. The US Scouts program presently has a Firewise badge and it just makes sense to offer one up for FireSmart. Getting the children more involved to play a role towards protecting their homes and learning how wildfire spreads through certain vegetation, building materials and hazards around the home will help strengthen the FireSmart program for years to come.

Learning about Fire Smart opens your eyes to things you never knew you should be doing at home, as simple as cleaning a gutter and not using bark mulch around the foundation. I'm always afraid to admit this but after learning about Fire Smart I checked my own home and discovered it is in the extreme category, yikes as a Prevention Officer I better get cracking and remedy this!

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Ontario's FireSmart Communities Program – by Jim Murphy



We have developed a variety of community based FireSmart tools designed under the Partners in Protection FireSmart program. Our focus has been to be able to have a strong platform of training materials along with instructional guides so that municipalities can establish their own FireSmart Committee to begin the process of developing a FireSmart Community Wildfire Plan. The key to success is for a community to take ownership of the FireSmart program and drive it down to the public level to build a complete FireSmart program.

In discussing the FireSmart Communities process with various municipal representatives it became very clear that for the FireSmart program to be successful, municipalities prefer to follow the leadership example set by other municipalities as opposed to being directed by outside agencies.

In 2010 we began a process to find communities that would be interested in becoming the municipality that could be an advocate for the FireSmart Communities Planning process in Ontario.

The South Central FireSmart Committee was established from representatives of six municipalities, (Municipality of Hastings Highlands, Town of Bancroft, Township of Carlow-Mayo, Township of Tudor & Cashel, Limerick Township, and Township of Galway Cavendish Harvey). The committee is also supported by the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources fire office located in Haliburton.

Over the past two years the committee has been busy with the development of a FireSmart Community Wildfire Plan and different projects to engage the residents in their areas. The committee has unveiled a series of wildfire prevention signs throughout the area as a reminder to people to be "FireSmart" when living and playing in the forests of cottage country. The committee is also looking to create "FireSmart" demonstrations sites with interpretive signage that will showcase fire mitigation steps within the priority zones. The other significant opportunity that the committee is looking to develop is opportunities for the youth from the community to become involve with public safety and help conduct FireSmart property assessments.

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We are excited to bring the FireSmart Canada Communities Recognition Program to Ontario and bring some of the South Central FireSmart committee members to the training session this fall. This will help build a complete FireSmart program for these six municipalities.

While the South Central FireSmart committee will focus on the higher level plan for the municipality, the FireSmart Canada program can help smaller committees become established in areas that may have been identified as higher risk for wildland fire impacts. Both programs will complement one another and will help build the municipal model that other communities in Ontario can follow.



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