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Public Safety, Emergency Response**

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"Fair Wage" Bill Would Complicate Public Safety, Emergency Response

November 1, 2017

Association of Municipalities of Ontario President Lynn Dollin was at Queen's Park on October 31st advocating for changes that would ensure effective and affordable public safety/emergency response.

"We depend on on-call and stand-by workers to step in during major storms, disasters and other emergencies," said Lynn Dollin, AMO President. "Collective agreements are negotiated to reflect these unique roles, and ensure fair compensation and treatment for these important workers."

Dollin is seeking amendments to fix the unintended consequences of Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*. For example, the bill would require matching pay for full-time and stand-by workers, and additional payments for on-call work, even volunteer firefighters. Volunteer firefighters are on a "call list" rather than being on-call. They choose to respond to a call and are only paid for the hours that they work.

"The Province agrees that municipal governments weren't the intended target of this bill. In fact municipal governments are employers of choice within their communities," Dollin said.

Municipal governments have been tallying the costs of the Bill 148's requirements. For some small and large urban municipalities the costs are upwards of \$1 to \$2 million per year.

"Across Ontario municipal costs are already rising at about \$1 billion per year, often driven by provincial laws and this is a text book example," Dollin added. "If they don't amend the bill, municipalities will be forced to either greatly increase property taxes, reduce local services - or both."

For more information :

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Shuniah seeks Bill 148 exemption over volunteer firefighter costs

New rules would see municipality pay volunteer firefighters 'approximately \$47,000 a year,' CAO says

CBC News · An hour ago

Shuniah council is calling on the province to re-examine its proposed Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act over concerns that the bill would cause volunteer firefighting costs to skyrocket.

Currently, volunteer firefighters with the Municipality of Shuniah are paid varying amounts, based on the level of responsibility an individual firefighter has, and how many hours they contribute as a firefighter each year to calls, training and other related activities, said Paul Greenwood, Shuniah's chief administrative officer.

Greenwood said Shuniah currently pays its volunteer firefighters from \$1,500 to \$7,000 a year; payments are made quarterly.

On call three hours a day

However, the Act, also known as Bill 148, includes a provision that would see volunteer firefighters placed on call for three hours a day, 365 days a year, regardless of whether or not a fire is taking place.

While they're on call, each volunteer firefighter would be paid about \$43 an hour, Greenwood said, which is based on an average wage for firefighters in Ontario.

- **Municipal tax may need hike to pay for Fair Workplaces Act**
- **Minimum wage bill will 'bankrupt' municipalities, mayors warn premier**

"If this were to pass, approximately \$47,000 would be paid to a volunteer firefighter to be on call," Greenwood said. "Municipalities would have to re-evaluate how volunteer firefighting is modelled and the service provided."

It would also have an impact on property taxes in Shuniah; the resolution tabled at Tuesday's Shuniah council meeting states taxes would rise by 24 per cent.

Resolution passed by council

The resolution called for the province to give Shuniah an exemption from the new on-call rules contained in Bill 148, as well as for the province to conduct a "full economic impact analysis" of the bill.

The resolution was passed; Greenwood said it was to be forwarded on to the province on Wednesday.

Bill 148, meanwhile, passed second reading in the Ontario legislature on Oct. 18. Greenwood said Shuniah isn't the only municipality concerned over the bill.

"The province is getting feedback both for and against this bill," he said.

Shuniah has about 25 volunteer firefighters on its roster, Greenwood said.

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