ADMINISTRATION—FIRE PROTECTION¹

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Administration in fire protection services in Canada covers a wide field extending across this nation from coast to coast. Each province has its own organization quite separate and apart from any of its neighboring provinces and quite peculiar to its own particular needs and local conditions. Differences in organization, of course, indicate quite different methods of administration. There are, however, certain salient features in administration quite common to all provinces and all organizations within a province.

In organizing a forest fire protective service or association, certain important features must of necessity be kept in mind.

1. The organization must have a chief administrative officer, preferably a graduate forest engineer with years of administrative and practical experience, whose first duty should be to organize sufficient staff to take care of all administrative duties. He must make sure all members of his staff know their duties and realize their responsibilities and have the will to carry them out promptly and efficiently.

2. The area under protection should be divided into administrative units or districts each under a fully qualified district forester with administrative ability and years of practical experience.

3. Each forest district should then be subdivided into forest ranger districts with fully qualified forest rangers in charge, preferably men with years of practical experience in the field of fire suppression. They should be assisted by as many qualified assistant forest rangers as necessary to do all the administrative and operational jobs. They must be able to supervise the sub-staff, or temporary personnel, in all operational functions of the service.

4. Sufficient office staff must be employed on a full time basis to take care of the usual administrative routine and in addition, sufficient clerks, time keepers, radio operators and other personnel must be employed, if not permanently then at least on a part time basis, during periods of high hazard and during fire suppression operations. In the latter case some definite arrangement should be made with industry to supply men, temporarily on loan, to do these jobs. The above is not an entirely satisfactory arrangement since there is not the same interest nor the same devotion to duty. There is the danger that decisions may be made from the company viewpoint rather than from the point of view of the provincial organization.

5. Finances must be provided either through direct legislation, where certain funds from taxation are earmarked for fire protection purposes, or through some method of assessment with legislative approval. Budgets should be carefully set up to cover all items which may be estimated in advance. Since budgets for actual fire suppression costs cannot be accurately estimated, an average of previous expenses should be assumed to be the amount required or an estimated figure should be allowed using the average as a guide. Any

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over-expenditure for fire suppression as an emergency operation would then need authorization by special warrants.

6. The administrator should arrange for the purchase of sufficient equipment to equip fire suppression crews properly with tools or should arrange with operating companies to rent such equipment if such as available in each district. Sufficient mobile equipment such as cars, jeeps, light, medium and heavy four wheel drive trucks and tankers, all fully equipped, should be made available to the staff. These should be owned outright by the organization or operated under a mileage or daily rental system.

Procrastination in supplying equipment is the thief of time and money since poorly equipped fire suppression forces cannot do the job they are required to do. Equipment must be ordered well in advance so that it may be delivered, tested and properly marked to distinguish it from equipment supplied by other agencies.

7. Officials in each district should always practice good public relations in their dealings with the public. They should be courteous but firm in any law enforcement proceedings. All enquiries for information, whether written or verbal, should be given prompt attention at all times with full details in order to be most helpful.

8. The press and radio should be contacted whenever anything of interest to the public may be released for publication. News services like to receive accurate up-to-date news properly authenticated. A quotation from a responsible person assures the public that reports are accurate and, therefore, may be depended upon. Play fair with news services and cooperate fully when news is available by supplying typewritten stories if you wish to be sure your local reporter gets the details correctly. Courteous and accurate statements to the press and radio will produce best results.

We have reviewed our activities, since the Canadian Society of Forest Engineers released the statement of Forest Policy in 1943, and believe all provinces have made considerable progress and many improvements in their organizations in an honest effort to follow the policy as laid down at that time. It may be that we have deviated occasionally, but in doing so I believe we have attempted to improve our position. It is quite possible that from time to time we have had to deviate from our course due to circumstances beyond our control. It is obviously better to make progress even by devious ways than to make no progress at all.

Canada has been comparatively prosperous since 1943. There has been no lack of funds in most cases to carry out progressive plans as laid down by the policymakers. Large fires at times have upset our calculations, but at the end of each bad fire year we have taken stock of our losses, held post-mortems and endeavoured to find out the cause and effect of such fires on our economy.

Considerable equipment has been introduced into fire fighting operations, particularly since the close of the war. Bulldozers, fire line ploughs, light and heavy tank trucks and other equipment have been placed in operation following the war. A considerable number of R.C.A.F refueling tankers became surplus after the war and were purchased at a bargain, by the various provinces, from

War Assets Corporation. These were placed in operation, after being remodeled to meet local conditions. Radio too has progressed rapidly and the installation of radio in all provinces has gone forward as fast as equipment could be made available.

I have been speaking more particularly of New Brunswick than of the other provinces since I know what has taken place in that province since 1943 and have had something to do with the development of our fire protective organization.

We have endeavoured to place trained men on our staff. We have employed more trained foresters than ever before and more ranger school graduates. We have endeavoured to train members of the non-technical and temporary staff in the performance of their duties. This, I believe, has been in accordance with our policy. Since we are not satisfied with what we have already done, we propose to continue our training program, not only in better organization and the techniques of forest protection, but also in all other lines of forestry.

Our forest fire protection policy is pretty well outlined in Sections 12 to 23 inclusive. In a review of these sections and looking back over our actual performance, it appears we have made an honest attempt to implement our policy. I believe we have all made much progress and have come a long way from the position in which we found ourselves ten years ago.

Now turning to forest administration and particularly to administration in fire protection, the following is quoted from Section 24:

"The object of forest administration should be to protect, develop and utilize our forest resources for the maximum benefit of the people of Canada. Aside from protection, the phases of this subject most urgently requiring present attention are legislation, personnel, forest finance, land classification and colonization, municipal forests, youth training and soldier rehabilitation."

You will note very little is said about forest protection, consequently we must use our imagination in developing our future policy. That is, we must define and develop some of the chief features in our provincial administration—in the organization of an active and well trained force to take care of all the administrative duties which might fall in this category.

A summary showing how each of the ten provinces of Canada is organized and administrated would be interesting and instructive. One could then pick out all the good points and try to write them into his own plan of organization. Possibly we may have time during discussion to hear from each chief administrative officer across Canada whose duty it may be to administer and control the forest protective organization in his province. If so, I believe such a discussion would show much progress.

It is my belief that so far training has not been given sufficient emphasis by any of us. By training I mean theoretical training in the art of organizing suppression forces as well as practical training in the field or "on the job" training so to speak. We have had some experience in New Brunswick in the training of personnel to take positions which would necessarily develop in

a large fire suppression organization through our connection with the Northeastern Forest Fire Commission. The Commission operates as a compact composed of the six New England States and New York with provision for the provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec to join if and when they decide to do so. So far neither of these two provinces has taken definite action although New Brunswick has made some effort. I believe the Federal Government would now be willing to give its approval should our Provincial Government apply for permission to become a member. During the past two years, our training team and other personnel have attended many training sessions most of which have been held in New Hampshire. They have greatly benefited by contact with the compact training team. Time does not permit me to describe the organization in detail, but I believe all states in the Compact have benefited, including ourselves, through interchange of information both theoretical and practical, in the class room and in the field, during these training sessions. In addition and equally important is the opportunity for forest protection men to become better acquainted with each other's problems which, after all, are often quite similar. Compact training will become much more interesting to the trainees when we get into the techniques of forest fire suppression. It is our hope we may be allowed to continue our present relations with members of the Compact which, I believe will be very beneficial to us.

Each state or provincial training team, on returning home following compact training sessions, proceeds to carry on in-state training of personnel in its own organization.

The Compact is now a closed corporation. It is considered unwise to allow other States to join the Northeastern Compact as the organization would become unwieldly. Other groups of states to the south and west are now discussing compacts among themselves, and I believe before long one or two such compacts will be developed.

Administrative officers must know their business, be active in mind and body, be drivers, if you will, have the ability to instill into the men in their organization the desire to do a good job and to handle the job quickly and efficiently. They must thoroughly understand the organization and the problems to be met in order to make decisions promptly and accurately and in the best interests of all concerned.