



## ICS/IMS Canada – Communiqué (February 2015)

### **Background**

The development of the Incident Command System (ICS) was the result of hard-won lessons learned by responders battling bush and forest fires in California during the 1970s. The challenges identified the need to improve and standardize command and coordination of the broad spectrum of responder personnel, jurisdictions, and equipment, regardless of the scale of an incident using an all-hazards approach.

The adoption of ICS into Canada began in the mid 1990s in British Columbia through its British Columbia Emergency Response System, followed by the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC). In 2002 CIFFC Canadianized the ICS materials from the United States to improve on-site incident efficiency, improve interoperability for mutual aid, and enhance firefighter safety. All Provincial, Territorial and Federal wild land firefighting agencies across Canada subsequently adopted this ICS model. CIFFC, a leader in the ICS community, became the gatekeepers, owners, of the ICS Canada products. In subsequent years as the emergency management community became more familiar with ICS, various agencies and educational institutions started to produce their own versions of ICS training materials to meet an increasing interest to deliver some form of ICS training.

In April 2010 CIFFC was awarded funding through the National Search and Rescue Secretariat through the Search and Rescue New Initiatives Fund (SARNIF). The project's focus was to use the US FEMA version of ICS as a basis to develop an "All Hazards" ICS Canada curriculum for the Canadian Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) volunteer community, the primary beneficiary of the project; several provincial and federal government agencies partnered in the project. CIFFC made application and was awarded a second three year SARNIF grant for April 2014-March 2017. This project will work to complete the development of several position specific training courses under the ICS Canada banner.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The recognized success of the ICS model resulted in incident management processes being widely applied and adapted by a multitude of users across Canada, including wild land fire agencies, all-hazard emergency response agencies and various departments of the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments. With each adaptation, standardization of the systems grew further apart. The variances has put interoperability objectives at risk, both within Canada and when dealing with our international partners.

The ICS Canada Steering Committee was formed from a "coalition of the willing". Initially the overarching goal was to protect and standardize the ICS all hazard approach used across Canada; the goals and scope have since expanded.

The primary objectives for ICS Canada are to promote the standardized usage of ICS Canada products among agencies to enhance interoperability, to provide governance in the development of those training products in both official languages, and to promote reciprocity between agencies as responders and emergency management personnel are deployed or relocate throughout Canada.



To support the objectives of ICS Canada a “standard” document was developed that defines the standards for all ICS training curriculum, training providers, and student participation and certification.

In December of 2013 the ICS Canada Steering Committee formally merged efforts with the former group known as ICS/IMS to include broader representation and expand the scope for participants. The newly adopted objectives for the ICS/IMS Canada committee are:

- Ensure the continued integrity of ICS Canada products through collaborative partnerships with provinces and territories and key stakeholder groups.
- Develop a common standardized ICS/IMS framework and action plan for responder personnel to ensure interoperability for all participating agencies.
- Develop governance and funding models for long term sustainability of the organization.

To ensure we are respecting the diversity and unique jurisdictional differences among all the provinces, territories and agencies it is paramount that the ICS/IMS Canada Committee continues to foster new and existing partnerships. Over the past few years several new relationships have formed and continue to strengthen. Specifically ICS/IMS Canada now sits as a committee member on the Canadian Tri-Services Emergency Management Committee (CTSEMC). This recognition from the Tri-Services groups, which represents the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Paramedics Chiefs of Canada, reinforces the work and direction of ICS/IMS Canada.

## **Participants**

ICS/IMS Committee membership includes participation from each Canadian province, territory and jurisdiction and organization using ICS Canada products, plus those currently using a different system of Incident Command, but interested in developing a Canadian Standardized ICS/IMS framework. At the end of 2014, participation has included all provinces/territories, and seven agencies/organizations. Of those jurisdictions, nine have adopted the role as Authority Having Jurisdictions (AHJ) for the ICS Canada product.

Authority Having Jurisdictions (AHJ) identifies the organization, office, or individual having statutory responsibility for administrating and enforcing the requirements of the standard training. AHJs provide quality assurance of training materials and delivery within their area of jurisdiction, training provider recognition and maintain a database of all training conducted in their respective jurisdiction.

## **ICS/IMS Committee membership**

**Agencies that have identified as the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for ICS Canada include:**

EMO, Nova Scotia

EMO, PEI

Manitoba Office of the Fire Commissioner

Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Emergency Management and Fire Safety Branch, Saskatchewan

Fire and Emergency Services, Newfoundland and Labrador  
Yukon Protective Services  
Parks Canada Agency  
Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada

**Other agencies that have not identified as AHJ but hold current membership on ICS/IMS Canada:**

Sûreté du Québec  
Emergency Management BC, British Columbia  
EMO, Manitoba  
EMO, New Brunswick  
Emergency Response and Recovery, Nunavut  
EMO, Northwest Territories  
Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management, Ontario  
GSAR Council Canada  
Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC)  
National Search and Rescue Secretariat  
Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP)  
RCMP  
Canadian Coast Guard (working on becoming AHJ)  
Transport Canada  
Canadian Interoperability Technology Interest Group (CITIG)

## **Benefits to Emergency Management in Canada**

Since its inception, the ICS Canada project has produced very tangible results with the key development being a single ICS curriculum which is a significant enhancement to an all hazards approach to emergency management in Canada.

When faced with an emergency there are often many challenges which need to be overcome to provide an efficient and effective response. Far too frequently after action reports outline some of the primary challenges are attributed to the lack of IMT training, development and practice or the absence of any incident command. These challenges are further complicated by the multiple versions of the system agencies employ.

The vision of the ICS/IMS Canada committee has two primary goals, the first to ensure the integrity of standardized curriculum and the second to advance the development of an interoperable response framework. This will be accomplished through:

- Minimizing the cost of curriculum development to individual jurisdictions and agencies;
- Providing access to standardized course content for recognized training providers on the ICS Canada website - <http://www.icscanada.ca/>
- Ensuring curriculum reflects best practices, employing consistent evaluation and delivery methods;
- Developing Specific training for General, Command Staff Positions and Incident Management Teams;

- Respecting the diversity and jurisdictional variances within the government and agencies that either participates or supports an emergency event in the Pan Canadian Landscape;
- Increasing the adoption of the Incident Command System as the command system of choice for emergency response and where needed recognizing equivalent systems which meet the same core competencies and training standards;
- Enhancing the interagency and cross border interoperability necessary for effective, efficient, and coordinated emergency response.

## **Moving Forward**

Membership of the committee will be comprised of all participating agencies, who provides strategic guidance and ensures the continued development and progress of the ICS Canada products and ICS/IMS Canada concept through:

- Ensuring revisions and updates to the ICS Canada curriculum are completed;
- Ensuring the integrity of the ICS Canada program is maintained;
- Promoting interoperability of ICS among agencies and at all levels of government
- Providing input and guidance on the development of a Pan Canadian Incident Management System similar to US NIMS and the Australian AIIMS.

Moving forward the ICS/IMS Canada Committee will pursue support and recognition from the Canadian Council of Emergency Management Organizations (CCEMO) and SOREM (Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management).