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No Less A Firefighter: Creating Safe, Healthy, and Inclusive Work Environments for Women Firefighters in Ontario

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MPA Research Project

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No Less a Firefighter:

Creating Safe, Healthy and Inclusive Work Environments
for Women Firefighters in Ontario

<u>Executive Summary</u>

This research project seeks to answer the question of why there are so few women employed as professional firefighters in Ontario municipalities by identifying the workplace hazards and risk factors related to safety, health and inclusion in their work environments. Data collected from twenty-four women who currently work or previously worked as professional firefighters in Ontario was analyzed using a conceptual framework based on the three elements of safety, health and inclusion. The alarming results show that women firefighters are exposed to workplace hazards and risk factors either by experiencing, directly witnessing or being told about workplace bullying, general harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. Based on the data analysis, six recommendations are being made. The recommendations include concrete actions related to policy, procedure, training, equipment, fitness and endurance testing, response to workplace bulling, harassment and sexual harassment and areas for further study, that municipalities can take to protect the safety and health of women firefighters and support their inclusion. This research project puts forth the argument that work environment hazards and risk factors need to be addressed in order to successfully recruit and retain women as professional firefighters and is a call to action for decision-makers at the municipal and provincial levels to effect positive change in fire halls across Ontario.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

I wish to acknowledge the support of Professor Catherine Burr,

MPA (Local Government Program) at the University of Western Ontario.

Her supervision of this research project was invaluable.

This report is dedicated to the brave women who pursue firefighting as a career,

despite all of its challenges.

Your strength and courage is inspiring!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women represent just over three percent of the total professional firefighting force in

Canada (Service Canada, 2011). According to the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office, there are

approximately 11 250 full and part-time professional firefighters in Ontario (Ontario Office of the

Fire Marshal, *Number of Fire Departments and Firefighters,* 2012). By applying the national

statistic to Ontario one can estimate that approximately 337 women[1] work as professional

firefighters in the Province. This research project aims to identify whether the environment in

which the women are working, related to their safety, health and inclusion, is a contributing factor

to the low representation of women in firefighting.

Project Background

The interest in this research stems from my experience as a Ward Councillor in Norfolk

County, a single tier municipality in southwestern Ontario, bordering the counties of Haldimand,

Oxford, Elgin and Brant. In March, 2008 Norfolk County undertook a master planning process for

the Norfolk County Fire and Rescue Services (Davidson, 2010, p.1). Council struck a committee

that consisted of Fire and Rescue Services staff, including the Chief, Deputy Chief, a District

Chief and Fire Prevention Officer (Davidson, 2010, p. 17). Members of the community at large

were also appointed, along with myself as a representative of Norfolk County Council (Ibid). Two

staff from the Ontario Office of the Fire Marshal facilitated the process using their "Fire Safe

Communities" master planning template (Davidson, 2010, p. 1).

The purpose of the Fire Services master planning process was to identify strengths,

weaknesses, risks and gaps in the Norfolk County Fire and Rescue Services as they related to

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[1] Information on the Ontario Office of Fire Marshal website lists the number of firefighters in Ontario by type of department (professional, composite and volunteer) but does not give a breakdown based on gender.

things like standard operating policies and guidelines, equipment, budget, training and human resources (Ibid). During the process one of the human resources gaps identified was that, in a volunteer firefighting force of 242 firefighters, there were no women. It came to light that there had never been a woman firefighter in Norfolk County. When this was questioned, the response given was that women had not been strong enough to pass the physical fitness testing. I wondered if there were other variables at play. In 2011 the first woman firefighter was hired by Norfolk County, serving in Station 1, the largest station located in Simcoe.

The lack of women in firefighting is not an isolated phenomenon unique to Norfolk County. This is illustrated by the national statistic from Service Canada noted in the opening paragraph. A review of some of the scholarly, practitioner and popular literature has also revealed gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace in the lived experiences[2] of women firefighters in the United States (Hulett, D.B., 2008; Rosell, Miller & Barber, 1995) and Australia (McLennan & Birch, 2006) as well as Canadian cities such as Richmond, British Columbia (Bennett, 2006) and Windsor, Ontario (CBC News, 2011). This has led me to question whether workplace hazards and risk factors contribute to the low number of women working as firefighters in Ontario. To begin to examine this, a research project was developed.

Research Questions

The research project looks to answer the following two questions.

1. To what extent are professional women firefighters in Ontario experiencing workplace hazards and risk factors related to their safety, health and inclusion?

2. As employers, what can and should municipalities do to be more inclusive of women firefighters in their fire services?

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[2] The term "lived experiences" refers to women's personal perceptions of workplace bullying, general harassment and sexual harassment. It is acknowledged that a woman's lived experiences may be similar or different than what may be found through an investigation.

These questions will be answered by collecting data from women who are currently or who have previously worked as professional firefighters in Ontario, using an online, anonymous questionnaire. This process will be explained further in chapter four, the methodology section, of this report.

The survey data are analyzed using a conceptual framework consisting of the elements of a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment. This framework was developed following a review of the scholarly, practitioner and popular literatures related to women in firefighting, workplace bullying, harassment and sexual harassment, causes and effects of these inappropriate workplace behaviours, and effective interventions for targeted victims. The literature review and conceptual framework will be explained in more detail in chapters two and three respectively, of this report.

Research Purpose

The project's purpose is diagnostic and not to blame specific municipalities for apparent shortcomings. The research aim is to begin to identify workplace hazards and risk factors, and make recommendations for preventative and response strategies to address any problems. The strategies presented can assist in ensuring that once women are hired as firefighters they are treated in a way that protects their safety and health and promotes their inclusion. This approach supports women's ongoing pursuit of the profession. These strategies can also assist municipalities to effectively retain women firefighters and mitigate the costs and negative consequences associated with cases of workplace bullying, harassment and sexual harassment.[3] When increased numbers of women remain in the professional fire service they can serve as role models to younger women considering a firefighting career. This is one way that women's representation in firefighting can be increased in the long term.

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[3] Costs to employers associated with workplace bullying, harassment and sexual harassment may include increased time off due to stress-related illness, higher employee turnover, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board claims and the costs of litigation and damages sought by complainants.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To develop the conceptual framework for this research, a review of relevant literatures was undertaken. After reviewing the literature specifically related to women in firefighting the theme of women's lived experiences of workplace bullying and harassment clearly emerged. This led to a review of the literature related to workplace bullying, harassment and sexual harassment, its causes and effects. An examination of this literature revealed some environmental contributing factors that may be relevant for women firefighters, namely male dominance, skewed gender ratios and sex role spillover. Disengagement from the workplace and ultimately leaving the profession are common job-related effects of inappropriate behaviour on targets. The themes of safety, health and inclusion emerged as being important in a work environment. As the final part of the literature review each of these terms was defined using relevant legislation from the Province of Ontario, where possible. These three elements have been developed and used as the conceptual framework for the research project and will be discussed further in chapter three.

Women In Firefighting Literature

The literature review for this project began with an examination of scholarly literature related specifically to women in firefighting. Studies were examined from the United States and Australia. The subject of all of the articles reviewed was the women's lived experiences of workplace bullying, general harassment and sexual harassment. No Canadian studies were located. However, a review of some of the Canadian popular literature, newspaper articles specifically, revealed details of the same types of cases of sexual harassment in the fire services of the cities of Richmond, British Columbia and Windsor, Ontario. These cases will be described in more detail further on in this chapter.

An American study entitled "A National Report Card on Women in Firefighting" was released by the International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services in April, 2008 (Hulett D. B., 2008, p. 1). The women who participated in the study, either through questionnaires or focus groups, identified many different forms of discrimination and harassment, including not having appropriate accommodation for sleeping, showering and washrooms; harassment at mealtimes, which included everything from exclusion to food contamination; pranks, jokes, sexual harassment, and expectations that the women would date their male-counterparts. On the more severe end of the spectrum, six percent of the women surveyed reported having been physically assaulted (Hulett D. B., 2008, p. 3). Of the 114 women who participated in the study, 84.7 percent of them responded that they had experienced differential treatment because of their gender (Ibid). These results are in keeping with earlier findings from the United States. A 1995 study produced the following results:

> Packets of questionnaires were mailed to 103 fire departments
> across the country identified by the International Association of
> Fire Chiefs as employing women firefighters . … Of the 1,108
> women firefighters employed by the departments, 206 returned
> employee surveys (an 18.6% response rate). Over half of the
> sampled female firefighters (58.2%) reported sexual harassment.
> … Sexually harassed respondents did not differ in age, education,
> or marital status from their non-harassed co-workers.
> (Rosell, Miller, & Barber, 1995, pp. 340-341)

A 2006 Australian study was released by the South Australian Country Fire Service. In this service there were at least four times the number of women working in firefighting as compared to the American studies; the Australian women were also volunteer firefighters. This study produced different responses to questions about sexual harassment. The study showed that the women firefighters experienced sexual harassment in their workplace, although at lower rates of prevalence. Of the 104 women respondents, twenty-four percent indicated that they had experienced discrimination (McLennan & Birch, 2006, p. 21). Forty-eight respondents, or eleven percent, indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace (Ibid). The

behaviours reported included inappropriate sexual comments, unwanted sexual advances, touching and one woman reported experiencing sexual assault (Ibid).

Secondary reports from newspapers and periodicals were found that reported incidents of sexual harassment in Canadian fire halls. One such case occurred in Richmond, British Columbia. Between 1997 and 2001, women of the Richmond Fire and Rescue Services experienced the same kind of discriminatory and harassing behaviours from their male co-workers as was reported by the American and Australian women. One of the women from the Richmond force, Teresa Rush, spoke about her experiences publicly in a news article (Bennett, 2006). Rush claims that she and the other women were treated as outsiders by the all-male force. She identifies that, while serving in the force, she was threatened by a male co-worker for locking the washroom door while using it. There were no washrooms dedicated for the women's use. She also claimed she was called names, pressured to participate in explicit sexual discussions with male co-workers and denied proper training and debriefing after a critical medical incident. One of Rush's claims was that "the city fostered a culture of sexual discrimination and harassment against female fire fighters by failing to take action." (Mediator finds women fire fighters in Richmond endured harassment at work, 2006). Her claim was dismissed by the British Columbia Supreme Court and she was referred back to her union. It is noteworthy that the co-worker who had threatened Rush over the washroom incident was the union representative (Bennett, 2006).

An Ontario example is found in Windsor, Ontario. According to news reports from the CBC, Mary Herzog, a firefighter with the City of Windsor since 1993, filed a multi-million dollar law suit against the City and supervisors in the fire department in January, 2011 (CBC News, 2011). Ms. Herzog's statement of claim alleged that she was working in a sexually charged environment and was subjected to "numerous unwanted and unwarranted acts of sexual, emotional and mental abuse" that no one did anything to stop. She sought millions of dollars in compensation for negligence, breach of trust, assault and intentional infliction of emotional

distress. Ms. Herzog identified that as a result she felt alone, ridiculed and afraid of losing her job.

Her description of the events and the negative outcomes she experienced is in keeping with the

literature examined on the issue. Unfortunately, searches using multiple keywords did not turn up

the outcome of this case. A request for information regarding the status of the Herzog case was

sent by email to the legal department at the City of Windsor. As of the completion of this report,

July 22, 2012, no response had been received.

Workplace Bullying, General Harassment and Sexual Harassment Literature

Overview

The next stage of the literature review involved the examination of scholarly and

practitioner literature on the subjects of workplace bullying, general harassment and sexual

harassment. This was undertaken as these issues emerged as common themes in the literature on

the subject of women in firefighting. From the literature examined, definitions of workplace

bullying, general harassment and sexual harassment were identified along with the causes of these

behaviours and the effects on targets.

Definitions

Workplace bullying behaviour is considered to be "repeated and persistent negative acts

towards one or more individuals, which involve a perceived power imbalance and create a hostile

work environment … bullying is a form of interpersonal aggression, or hostile, anti-social

behaviour in the workplace." (Salin, 2003, pp. 1214-1215). Examples of workplace bullying

behaviour include, "social isolation or silent treatment, rumours, attacking the victim's private life

or attitudes, excessive criticism or monitoring of work, withholding information or depriving

responsibility and verbal aggression" (Salin, 2003, p. 1215). Bullying is repeated, consistent and

continuous behaviour that typically takes place between members of the organization and is

targeted toward one or a few selected victims (Salin, 2003, p. 1216). Acts of bullying may not be

initially perceived to be negative, however when repeated over time the result is a hostile work environment. For example, monitoring of work and criticism may initially be thought of as reasonable supervision.

General workplace harassment can be defined as "expressions of disrespect and hostility that are intended to harm the target" (Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009, p. 4). Examples of harassing behaviour include "staring, dirty looks, belittling statements, ostracism, ridicule, threats and physical violence." (Ibid). When this type of behaviour becomes sexual in nature or is based on the target's sex, then it becomes sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has been defined as unwanted sex-related behaviour at work that is perceived by the target as offensive, unwanted or unwelcome and which has the purpose or effect of being hostile, intimidating, degrading, humiliating or offensive (McDonald, 2012, p. 2). Similarities exist between general and sexual harassment related to the workplace conditions that contribute to harassment and the organizational and personal outcomes.

A 2005 study conducted with women in the United States Armed Forces related to the severity and pervasiveness of sexual harassment indicated four types of sexual harassing behaviours, namely, sexist hostility, sexual hostility, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion (Langhout, Bergman, Cortina, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, & Williams, 2005, p. 984). Sexist hostility refers to experiences lacking explicit sexual content, but apparently discriminating on the basis of sex. An example of sexist hostility might be the women in the fire hall being ignored or given the silent treatment. Sexual hostility means rude and crude sexualized experiences, for example, offensive sexual jokes or stories. Unwanted sexual attention includes behaviours such as fondling and kissing. Sexual coercion implies faster promotions or better treatment if the victim is sexually cooperative, or retaliation if she does not comply with sexual demands (Ibid). The study showed that one type of sexually harassing behaviour is not necessarily worse than the others, although sexist hostility is particularly intolerable as it creates an environment that is

unwelcoming, unsafe and hostile for women workers. The issue of pervasiveness of the harassment, meaning the frequency and duration, was found to be the factor that contributed to the victims' impressions of severity (Langhout, Bergman, Cortina, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, & Williams, 2005, pp. 999-1000).

The way that women define sexual harassment will impact whether they name their lived experiences as such and whether they lodge a complaint. Women's identification of experiences of sexual harassment can be impacted by race, citizenship and class (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006, p. 89). In a 2006 study examining the intersections between race, citizenship and sexual harassment, Welsh et al. found that women defined their lived experiences differently depending on their race and their citizenship status in Canada (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006, pp. 98-102). The women, who were interviewed in focus groups, also discussed issues related to sexuality, age, English as a second language, and disability and the effect these had on their experiences (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006, p. 92). The authors' analysis concluded that the legal definition of sexual harassment in Canada does not necessarily serve diverse groups of women well (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006, p. 95). These findings should serve as a reminder to supervisors and workplace investigators to be sensitive to issues of identity when identifying and responding to incidents in the workplace.

Causes and Effects

This section discusses the causes and effects of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace. An examination of the research related to workplace environmental factors associated with bullying, general and sexual harassment shows that women firefighters may be at particular risk of being targeted, victimized and working in unsafe, unhealthy and non-inclusive work environments. The issue of power imbalance is shown to be of importance in relation to all of these forms of inappropriate workplace behaviour. Bullying involves a power imbalance or a

victim-perpetrator dimension (Salin, 2003, p. 1216). Bullying tends to escalate, with the victim ending up in an inferior status position (Parzefall & Salin, 2010, p. 763). General and sexual harassment emerges out of hierarchical power relations and struggles for power in the workplace (Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009, p. 4). The formal and informal status hierarchies are reinforced through the humiliation and degradation of the victim (Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009, p. 5). In cases of bullying, general harassment and sexual harassment, the perpetrator has power over the victim, exploiting his hierarchical status to place the victim in an inferior position of authority. The para-military structure of fire services is based on hierarchy and power imbalances, with increased power and pay as firefighters are promoted up through the ranks (Hulett D. B., 2008, p. 9). This structure, combined with gender-based power differences, has the potential to increase women firefighters' level of risk of being targeted if appropriate interventions are not taken.

The major theories that exist to explain the reasons why sexual harassment occurs in the workplace are male dominance, sex role spillover and gender ratio theories (Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009, pp. 4-6). The male dominance theory purports that men use sexual harassment to maintain their own power in the workplace. By sexualizing their relations with their female co-workers, men reduce them to sexual objects and diminish their role as colleagues (Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009, p. 4). This reinforces and maintains male power and privilege within the workplace.

Sex role spillover is explained as the "inappropriate extension of gender roles to the workplace" (Ragins & Scandura, 1995, p. 430). Examples of sex role spillover include women in a workplace being viewed as subordinate, passive, submissive or as sex objects because of their gender. Sex role spillover facilitates sexual harassment as it creates behavioural norms for men and women based on the subordinate feminine role that has been traditionally played by women in the domestic and social spheres (Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009, p. 5). Some of the literature

connects sex role spillover with gender ratios. "Spillover is hypothesized as more likely to occur in work situations characterized by skewed gender ratios … than those where gender ratios are equal." (Ragins & Scandura, 1995, p. 431).

Gender ratios theory is based on the observation that workplaces vary greatly in the ratio of men and women. Ratios that are skewed heavily in one direction or another can produce greater sexual harassment because gender becomes more visible and therefore more of an issue (Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009, pp. 5-6). A 1995 study addressing specifically the issue of sexual harassment and firefighting agrees with the above statement. "The gender ratio in an organization plays an important role in how female employees are treated. … Whether explaining differential treatment or sexual harassment, male-dominated work settings are linked with gender stereotyping and negative working environments for underrepresented female employees." (Rosell, Miller & Barber, 1995, p. 340).

Gender ratios play the greatest role in cases of sexual harassment. The literature examined gives clear support to the idea that under-representation of women in a profession and women working in male-dominated jobs are linked to women experiencing sexual harassment (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 1071; Lopez, Hodson & Roscigno, 2009, pp. 5-6; McDonald, 2012, p.7). In a generalized study of sexual harassment in the workplace, Fitzgerald notes that "… smaller studies of specialized populations confirm that prevalence rates are highest in workplaces where women have traditionally been under-represented." (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 1071). She further notes a suspected belief that "women who venture into the dangerous (but challenging and lucrative) male worlds of firefighting, soldiering, mining, and so forth are expected to accept whatever harassment they receive." (Fitzgerald, 1993, p. 1072).

The impacts for targets of workplace bullying and harassment negatively impact a worker's safety and health and can be severe and long lasting, even after the inappropriate behaviour has

stopped. (Langhout, Bergman, Cortina, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, & Williams, 2005, p. 976; Lopez, Hodson & Roscigno, 2009, pp.22-23; McDonald, 2012, p. 4). The effects of bullying and harassment can include negative feelings and experiences that are psychological, health and job-related, including irritation, anger, anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, humiliation, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (McDonald, 2012, p. 4; Salin, 2003, pp. 1213-1214). These are all symptoms of mental-health related illnesses. Victims may also view themselves as unhealthy and unwell and may experience higher levels of physical illness (McDonald, 2012, p. 4; Salin, 2003, pp. 1213-1214).

Job related outcomes include higher rates of absenteeism and turnover and lower rates of job satisfaction, loyalty, commitment and productivity (Langhout, Bergman, Cortina, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, & Williams, 2005, p. 980; McDonald, 2012, p. 4; Salin, 2003, p. 1214). Job-related outcomes may be related to not feeling included in the work environment. Workers who do not feel a part of the organization and who do not feel valued and respected by the organization may be more apt to leave the organization or be unproductive during their work hours than those who feel that they and their work is valuable and important. These outcomes are significant for both the organization and individuals involved. Organizationally, increased costs are incurred for recruitment, training, benefits, lost work time, workplace health and safety claims and possibly litigation. There is also a risk to the organization of harm to its reputation. For individuals the costs can include loss of wages, medical and psycho-therapeutic treatment, loss of identity, self-esteem and pride, and loss of a career.

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

A description of a gender inclusive (or non-inclusive) work environment is provided in scholarly literature. Yancy Martin refers to gender discrimination and non-inclusion as "gendering practices" and "practicing gender" in the workplace (Yancy Martin, 2003, p. 343). Practicing

gender in the workplace means bringing ideas about gender roles and behaviour into the workplace and using them to guide decision-making (Ibid). This could include using gender ideals to divide tasks, decide promotions or make hiring decisions. In a fire service practicing gender may occur if women firefighters are assigned only certain jobs on the fire ground or if the male firefighters try to "protect" or "take care of" their female colleagues. Yancy Martin describes gender practices in the work place as being so unconscious and automatic that they are "hard to observe and when observed, hard to capture in language." (Yancy Martin, 2003, p. 350). They happen fast, are in action and occur on many levels (Ibid). However, she also argues that, when viewed and named, harmful gender practices can be effectively challenged (Ibid). Some of the ways given to challenge harmful gender practices include practicing gender reflexively, understanding how gender is practiced by people in positions of power, and finding out why people practice gender at work (Yancy Martin, 2003, pp. 356-358).

Practicing gender reflexively means acting only after careful consideration of the intent, content and effect of one's behaviour on others (Ibid). Understanding how gender is practiced by people in positions of power means looking at the way people in positions of power use gender ideals to guide their decision-making. Examples of this in a fire hall would be qualified women firefighters being passed over for promotions or training and development opportunities or not being given meaningful work when being accommodated due to pregnancy. Finally, uncovering how people practice gender at work involves ascertaining whether people's behaviour in the workplace is as a result of free choice and will or as a way of being accountable to institutionalized gender practices (Ibid). This involves a critical examination of an organization's policies and procedures. Yancy Martin's explanations of practicing gender and gender practices in the workplace are important to the creation of an inclusive work environment. Challenging gender practices that are discriminatory assist in promoting a gender-inclusive work environment.

To challenge gender discrimination and improve inclusion, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to the existence and continuation of discriminatory practices. Gender stereotyping and organizational factors contribute to discrimination in the workplace (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011, p. 765). Gender discrimination is associated with cultural beliefs about men and women and institutionalized policies and practices in workplaces (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011, p. 766). Cultural beliefs about gender exhibited through sex categorization and gender stereotyping are considered foundational to the existence of gender discrimination in the workplace (Ibid). Sex categorization causes workers to be placed either in or out of the work group on the basis of gender, for example being ignored, isolated or excluded from certain workplace activities. Gender stereotyping formulates beliefs about what workers are or what they should be, based on their gender (Ibid). Women firefighters experience gender stereotyping when their physical and overall abilities to perform the job functions are questioned by their co-workers and/or supervisors.

Secondary causes of gender discrimination in the workplace are institutional policies, practices and structures (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011, p. 767). These organizational elements, while purported to be gender-neutral, may actually serve to maintain and legitimize men's power and privilege in the work place (Ibid). Another organizational factor that can contribute to gender discrimination in the workplace is the organization's gender composition (Ibid). Gender is shown to be important enough in the work place to affect behaviour when men and women come into contact in a setting where gender stereotyping is linked to the work setting and job duties (Ibid). Gender composition in the workplace is also an issue when women are working in traditionally male-dominated professions (Ibid). This is relevant to women working as firefighters as they are clearly outnumbered in fire services in Canada, making up just over three percent of the nation's professional force (Service Canada, 2011). Firefighting has traditionally been a male dominated profession based on physical strength and traditional methods of recruitment and selection. Knowing the factors that contribute to the existence of gender discrimination is important in

defining an inclusive work environment and in determining interventions that will challenge

gender discrimination and cause a shift toward an inclusive work environment.

Safety, Health and Inclusion

After examining literature related to women in firefighting, workplace bullying, general

harassment, sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the workplace, the themes of safety,

health and inclusion emerged. To define the terms safety, health and inclusion, one can look to

pertinent provincial legislation in Ontario related to workplace health and safety and human rights.

In Ontario, workers' safety and health rights and employers' legal responsibilities are

governed by The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). For the purposes of this research,

the OHSA amendments brought about by Bill 168 are relevant. Bill 168 came into effect on June

15, 2010, amending the OHSA to strengthen workers' protection from the safety and health effects

of workplace violence and workplace harassment (Government of Ontario, *Preventing Workplace*

Violence and Workplace Harassment, 2011). These legislative amendments prohibit workplace

violence and workplace harassment due to their negative effects on workers' safety and health. In

other words, violence and harassment are workplace hazards and risk factors that contribute to an

unsafe and unhealthy work environment.

According to the OHSA, s.1 workplace violence is defined as,

> The exercise of physical force by a person against a worker,
> in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker;
> An attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a
> workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker;
> A statement or behaviour that is reasonable for a worker to
> interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker,
> in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker (Ibid).

Workplace harassment is defined in section one as,

> engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against
> a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably
> to be known to be unwelcome. Workplace harassment may

> include bullying, intimidating or offensive jokes or innuendos,
> displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials, or
> offensive or intimidating phone calls. (Ibid).

This language is a concise definition of behaviours that are considered compromising to a safe and healthy work environment.

An inclusive work environment is also defined in legislation. This research will consider an inclusive work environment in terms of freedom from gender discrimination. Legislatively, The Ontario Human Code protects workers' from employment-based discrimination (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009). Section 5 (1) states

> Every person has the right to equal treatment with respect
> to employment without discrimination based on race, ancestry,
> place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex
> sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status,
> family status or disability. (Ibid).

Further, the Ontario Human Rights Commission articulates that the right to equal treatment is applicable to "applying for a job, being recruited, training, transfers, promotions, terms of apprenticeship, dismissals and layoffs" (Ibid). It is covers "rates of pay, overtime, hours of work, holidays, benefits, shift work, discipline and performance evaluations." (Ibid). Although this language does not speak to the level at which a worker should be welcomed into a work environment it does protect workers from unequal treatment based on discrimination. For the purposes of this research, an inclusive work environment will be defined as gender equality and freedom from gender-based discrimination for women firefighters in the workplace.

Workplace Interventions

One of the goals of this research is to make recommendations to municipalities, as the employer, for strategies they can undertake to promote safety, health and inclusion in their fire services. Recommendations will come from the data collection, however, scholarly and practitioner literature also speaks to this issue on both individual and organizational levels

(Felblinger, 2008, p. 234). Education is considered an important first step in raising awareness about appropriate behaviours and boundaries in the workplace and in the creation of a respectful work environment (Felblinger, 2008, p. 239). Respect is undeniably an important element of a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment. The American Association of Critical Care Nurses has taken the position that there are six "essential, evidence-based and relationship-centred standards for establishing and sustaining healthy work environments." (Ibid). They are skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision-making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition and authentic leadership (Ibid). These elements might also be applied to the creation of an inclusive work environment where all workers are part of the communication loop, decision-making process, are given leadership opportunities and recognized for their contributions and accomplishments. In this way all workers' are valued, respected and fully participate in the organization at an equal level to their peers.

Individual and organizational supportive interventions are also important where a work environment is unsafe, unhealthy or non-inclusive. Social support has been shown to be a mitigating factor of the relationship between inappropriate and uncivil experiences in the workplace and the associated negative outcomes (Miner, Brady, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2012, p. 344). The study conducted by Miner et al. showed that employees who felt emotionally and organizationally supported when experiencing incivility in the workplace reported lower levels of physical illness and job satisfaction than those who did not have support (Miner, Brady, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2012, p. 355).

The authors of the above study argued that social support can alleviate or prevent the stress response by allowing targets of inappropriate or uncivil workplace behaviour to "alter or redefine the event in a way that they perceive to be less harmful." (Miner, Brady, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2012, p. 345). This redefinition increases their ability to cope. Emotional support communicates respect for the target from individuals within the organization. Organizational

support fosters feelings of respect for the target from the organization as an entity. This positively impacts the target's beliefs about the extent to which the organization values and respects them as a worker (Ibid). The issue of organizational value and respect for the worker speaks directly to the issue of an inclusive work environment.

Conclusion

In summary, a review of the relevant literature specifically related to women in firefighting supports the assertion that many women firefighters are working in environments that are unsafe, unhealthy and not inclusive. Literature related to workplace bullying, workplace harassment and workplace sexual harassment, their causes and effects elaborate on and further clarify these definitions, distinctions and inter-relations. An examination of the causes of unsafe, unhealthy and non-inclusive work environments show that the environmental factors that contribute to workplace bullying, workplace harassment and workplace sexual harassment exist within municipal fire services, placing women firefighters at greater risk of exposure to negative behaviours and mistreatment in their workplaces. Ontario statutes and scholarly and practitioner literature guide the development of definitions of work environments that are safe, healthy and inclusive and indicates elements of these environments that are distinct and where they may overlap. The literature review, as outlined above, provides a foundation for the development of a conceptual framework suggesting that a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment is the key to recruiting and retaining women as professional firefighters in Ontario.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Rationale

From the literature reviewed, the conceptual framework of a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment emerged. This framework is being developed and used in this research project to analyze the questions of why there are so few women working as professional firefighters in Ontario and how municipalities, as the employer, can attract and retain more women to the fire service.

The rationale for the use of this framework for analysis lies in the belief that active or passive recruitment of women into the firefighting profession could potentially be short sighted, as well as ineffective and dangerous for the recruits if women firefighters are being placed in work environments that do not support their safety, health and inclusion. Women will not remain in the fire service if the cost to their safety and health is too great. Recruitment into an unsafe, unhealthy and non-inclusive work environment may expose more women to violence and its harmful effects.

This research will argue that in order to successfully recruit and retain women into fire services in Ontario, municipalities must focus on prevention and response strategies that serve to promote and protect the safety, health and inclusion of all of their workers, thereby increasing the representation of those who are not members of the dominant culture within the work environment, women specifically. Municipalities can do so using their legislative rights and responsibilities as articulated by The Ontario Human Rights Code (The Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009) and The Ontario Occupational Health & Safety Act (Government of Ontario, *Preventing Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment*, 2011).

Work environments that are safe, healthy or inclusive each have their distinct characteristics however there are elements that overlap. Figure 1 illustrates the combination of the three elements in the framework.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
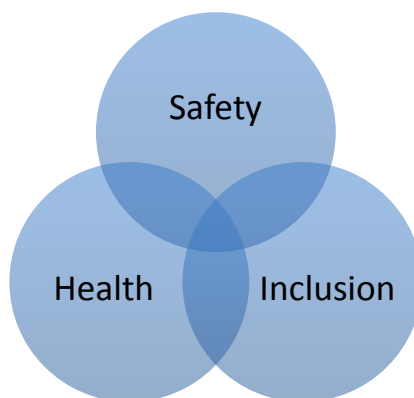
The conceptual framework for this research combines safety, health and inclusion to argue that it is the combination of these three elements, the overlapping areas in the above figure that is needed in order to attract and retain women in the firefighting profession.

Safety

Workers' right to a safe work environment is protected under The Occupational Health and Safety Act in Ontario (Government of Ontario, *Preventing Workplace Violence and Workplace Harassment*, 2011). The research will consider physical and psychological safety in the workplace. There are inherent safety risks in the firefighting profession, including falling from a high ladder, vehicle accidents, being trapped or buried in a collapsed building. This research considers safety in a broader scope to include the physical safety risks posed by abuse, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace (Ibid). A physically safe work environment can be compromised by inappropriate behaviour by peers or supervisors, including, physical and/or sexual assault, threats, tampering with equipment, ill-fitting equipment and purposefully placing

co-workers in dangerous situations without the required support (Hulett, D.B., 2008, pp.8-9).

Psychological safety, or the ability to feel free from threat, intimidation and fear of physical harm

from others in the workplace, can be jeopardized by the same behaviours, along with the fear of

retaliation or retribution if one should report the experiences (Miner, Brady, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt,

2012, pp.351-535; Parzefall, & Salin, 2010, p. 765). For the purposes of this research, behaviours

considered as hazards and risks to safety are those that physically harm a woman firefighter or that

threaten to physically harm her, including behaviours that are likely to create feelings of fear and

threat among targets.

Health

A healthy work environment is one that protects and promotes the physical and mental

health of the workers. In Ontario this right is largely and legislatively protected under The

Occupational Health and Safety Act and its associated regulations (Government of Ontario,

Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2012). Promoting and protecting workers' health involves

such actions as not exposing workers to toxic or noxious substances, ensuring that workers are not

working without breaks for meals, fluids and rest, and not allowing workers to work in extreme

cold or heat without proper protection (Ibid).

A healthy work environment also includes protection from physical illness due to work-

related stress and mental health conditions related to emotional and psychological distress (Miner,

Brady, Settles & Pratt-Hyatt, 2012, p. 343; Parzefall & Salin, 2010, 764). Stress-related physical

illnesses can include headaches, muscle stiffness and pain, joint pain, insomnia, nausea, vomiting

and other gastro-intestinal ailments. Stress-related mental health conditions can include anxiety,

depression, anger management problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts and

attempts. It is argued here that when defining a healthy work environment for women firefighters

one must look beyond the obvious health risks such as exposure to smoke and the possibility of

burns, and consider the physical, psychological and emotional stress that comes with being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated profession.

Inclusion

In an inclusive work environment all workers are considered able, valuable and equal members of the workforce by their supervisors and co-workers (Felblinger, 2008, p. 239). This means that they are respected for the uniqueness that they bring to their work. Diversity within the workplace is considered a benefit rather than a detriment. Workers have equal opportunities for growth and development; they are supported in their personal and professional growth with training and supervision opportunities that are meaningful (Hulett, D.B., 2008, pp. 9-10). Inclusivity also means that new workers are welcomed and are supported in their induction process. Activities and rituals to welcome new members are fun and respectful rather than dangerous and demeaning (Hulett, D.B., 2008, pp.8-9). Inclusivity also means freedom from discrimination in the workplace. For this research that means freedom from gender-based discrimination as outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Act, Section 5(1) (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2009), as described in detail in chapter two of this report.

Intersection of Safety, Health and Inclusion

In examining each element of the proposed framework of a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment, one can begin to identify common denominators. These might be characteristics or behaviours found in the overlapping areas of Figure 1, depicted earlier. In all three elements safety is important both physically and psychologically. Feelings of being unsafe physically or psychologically will compromise a worker's feelings of health and inclusiveness. Respect in the workplace is also a common denominator. When workers' behave respectfully toward each other safety, health and inclusiveness are all protected and promoted. A positive sense of belonging is also present in each type of work environment, as is a strong sense of team and the

collective, rather than the individual. All of these are important in firefighting. Conversely inappropriate or abusive behaviour in the workplace will compromise safety, health and inclusiveness. Workers' physical and/or psychological safety can be compromised when they experience workplace violence, bullying and sexual harassment. Their health is equally at risk as related literature shows that physical illness and mental health conditions are common effects for victims of workplace violence and harassment (Miner, Brady, Settles & Pratt-Hyatt, 2012, p. 343; Parzefall & Salin, 2010, p. 764). A work environment where violence, bullying and harassment occur is also not inclusive. Those members who are targeted are isolated from the majority, excluded from being fully participating members of the team and in some cases eventually pushed out of the workplace entirely.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This research seeks to apply the conceptual framework of a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment to the experiences of women working as professional firefighters in Ontario in order to ascertain the extent to which they experience their work environments as safe or unsafe, healthy or unhealthy, and inclusive or non-inclusive. This research also seeks to uncover whether work environments that are unsafe, unhealthy and non-inclusive might be contributing to the overall low number of women employed as professional firefighters in Ontario. There is not one component of the framework that is more important than the others; the three components, when put together, create a work environment in which workers are supported, encouraged and safe to pursue the career of their choice to their fullest potential.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Research Goal

This research project aims to gain information and insight into the lived experiences of women firefighters in Ontario in relation to their work environments, specifically the extent to which they experience or witness workplace hazards and risk factors related to safety, health and inclusion. To gather reliable data for this analysis, women working as professional, non-volunteer firefighters in Ontario were recruited to complete an anonymous, online questionnaire administered using Survey Monkey. These data were then analyzed in light of the conceptual framework discussed earlier in chapter three. Recommendations based on the data analysis are then made outlining actions that municipalities can take to increase the safety, health and inclusiveness of women working as firefighters in municipal fire services.

Approach

The research takes a cross-sectional approach. This approach has been selected as the research looks to measure only the presence of workplace hazards and risk factors related to safety, health and inclusion, not the duration or intensity. A longitudinal study was not considered due to the resource and time constraints related to this project and the anonymous nature of the questionnaire responses, making participant follow-up impossible. The research primarily used a quantitative approach; more in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with women who voluntarily requested to participate. One follow-up interview was conducted with a woman who volunteered; one other woman sent an email request for information regarding the process and content of a follow-up interview but did not make subsequent contact to participate after the information was given.

Research Participants

The study group consisted of women who are currently working or who have previously worked as professional firefighters in Ontario. Professional firefighting is defined as non-volunteer (Ontario Office of the Fire Marshal, *Number of Fire Departments and Firefighters*, 2012). The decision was made to restrict the research study group to professional firefighters due the lack of information related to the number of women working as volunteer firefighters in Canada (Service Canada, 2011). Additionally, the scholarly and practitioner literature reviewed for this project primarily related to women working as professional, non-volunteer firefighters (Hulett, 2008; Fitzgerald, 1993; Rosell, Miller & Barber, 1995). It is acknowledged that the experiences of women volunteer firefighters are important and this is identified as an area where further study is needed.

A provincial rather than national scope was chosen in order to incorporate provincial legislation related to occupational health and safety and human rights into the data analysis and recommendations. All municipalities in Ontario employing professional firefighters were considered potential sources of research participants in order to maximize the chances of having an adequate response rate and data for analysis, however, not every municipality employing professional firefighters was contacted. Wherever possible, women firefighters were recruited directly in order to protect their anonymity with their employer. Women firefighters were recruited through a Fire Chief or Deputy Chief only when it was known that this person was supportive of women in the firefighting profession. This method of recruitment was selected in order to protect the women who participated from potential retaliation and retribution.

Research Instrument

An online questionnaire, administered through Survey Monkey (Appendix B) was chosen as the research instrument to increase the ease and probability of participation and protect the

anonymity and confidentiality of the women firefighters who participated. A cover letter, (Appendix A) was drafted to recruit women firefighters to participate in the research. The letter contained information about the purpose and scope of the research, the intended use of the data collected, protection of anonymity and confidentiality, the link to the online questionnaire and the researcher's contact information. As some of the questions contained in the questionnaire were of a personal and sensitive nature which might cause uncomfortable or disturbing feelings for the participants, referral information was also given for the Assaulted Women's Helpline and the firefighter's Employee Assistance Program. The cover letter, online questionnaire and follow-up interview questions were approved by the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Political Science at Western University.

The online questionnaire contained eleven questions. The participants first acknowledged that they were participating voluntarily in the research project by completing the questionnaire. Participants were then asked whether they were currently working or previously worked as a professional firefighter in Ontario. Volunteer firefighters were prompted to answer this question in the negative. Anyone giving a negative response was prompted to move directly to the end of questionnaire and submit it as they are outside the scope of the research project. The next section of the questionnaire asked participants if they have been treated differently because of their gender, if they have witnessed a female co-worker being treated differently because of her gender, of if they have been told about a female co-worker being treated differently because of her gender. Any positive respondents were then prompted to give details by choosing from a list of forty-two behaviours that are examples of workplace hazards and risk factors related to an unsafe, unhealthy and non-inclusive work environment. Finally respondents were asked to give their recommendations related to what their municipality, as the employer could continue to do, do better or start doing to be more inclusive of women firefighters. The online questionnaire was

pre-tested by three women and determined to take no longer than fifteen minutes to complete. No changes were made to the questionnaire based on the pre-testing.

A goal of twenty responses to the questionnaire was identified as an appropriate minimum survey response rate in order to conduct data analysis.

<u>Challenges and Considerations</u>

One of the challenges of this project was that the exact size of the pool of potential research subjects was unknown. The gender breakdown of firefighters in Ontario is unknown therefore the number of women professional firefighters in Ontario was estimated at 337 based on national and provincial statistics. This is an approximation only, and provides a small pool of potential research participants, especially considering that they are spread all throughout Ontario. Not knowing the exact number of potential research participants makes it impossible to determine the actual response rate to the questionnaire.

Another challenge of the research, as it is designed, is that the validity of the data received can be challenged on the basis of the anonymity of the respondents. It cannot be definitively asserted that everyone who completed a questionnaire is in fact a woman professional firefighter in Ontario. This challenge is related to another, that being the fear of retaliation and retribution associated with participation. For this reason, the decision was made to protect the confidentiality of the research participants by maintaining their anonymity. This did prove to be an issue when recruiting women to participate in the research. Two women requested more information by email regarding the collection and use of the data, and to get reassurance of anonymity and confidentiality. It is known that some women chose not to participate in the research out of concern of negative outcomes however a definitive number cannot be given.

To mitigate the risk of the validity of the data being compromised because men or volunteer firefighters completed questionnaires, the distribution of the research questionnaires was

controlled. Research participants were recruited through referral. Women were contacted through known channels, for example, through the researcher's professional and Master of Public Administration program colleagues and friends, as well as referrals from other women firefighters. Research identified municipalities that have done considerable work on recruiting and retaining women as professional firefighters. These municipalities were contacted directly to participate. Women who completed the questionnaire had the option of forwarding the letter and questionnaire link to other women firefighters. It was assessed as unlikely that they would contaminate the project by forwarding the questionnaire link to someone who would be ineligible to participate in the research. The risk of non-participation due to lack of anonymity was assessed as greater than the risk of data contamination because of anonymity.

The research design anticipated that if there had been an inadequate response rate for data analysis, or if it appeared, or was known that the data had been contaminated, then an alternative form of data collection would be undertaken, namely key informant interviews. A decision concerning data contamination would be made if the data was considerably out of line with the study data examined in the literature review. Fortunately, alternative data collection did not need to be undertaken as there was an adequate response rate and no evidence of data contamination.

Timeline

A four week time period was given for data collection, beginning June 1 and ending June 30, 2012. After this time period lapsed, there were only seven responses to the questionnaire so an additional ten days was given and more recruitment efforts were undertaken, including making direct contact with Fire Chiefs in specific municipalities. At the end of the extended period twenty-four responses were received.

Process for Data Analysis

       The questionnaire and interview responses were aggregated. Data was analyzed using the conceptual framework of a safe, healthy and inclusive work environment. Table 1 contains the behaviours listed in the questionnaire and their categorization as workplace hazards and risk factors according to safety, health and/or inclusion.

Table 1: Behaviours Categorized For Analysis

BEHAVIOUR	SAFETY	HEALTH	INCLUSION
Physical abilities are questioned			✓
Overall ability to do the job is questioned			✓
Supervisor holds me/her to tougher performance standards		✓	✓
Not given training and development opportunities			✓
Passed over for promotions			✓
Unfair shift assignment			✓
Ill-fitting equipment	✓		✓
Equipment has been tampered with	✓		
Male co-workers try to "take care of" or "protect" me/her			✓
Only given certain jobs on the fire ground			✓
Co-workers have purposefully put me/her in danger on the fire ground	✓		
Ignored		✓	✓
Given the silent treatment		✓	✓
Isolated		✓	✓
Name calling		✓	
Verbal harassment		✓	
Belittling comments		✓	
Put downs, demeaning or offensive comments		✓	
Hostile notes, written material or text messages	✓	✓	
Offensive or intimidating phone calls	✓	✓	

BEHAVIOUR	SAFETY	HEALTH	INCLUSION
Bullying	✓	✓	✓
Hazing	✓	✓	✓
Intimidating or offensive gestures, jokes or remarks	✓	✓	✓
Physical assault	✓		
Displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials		✓	✓
Pornography in the workplace		✓	✓
Explicit sexual discussions		✓	✓
Requests for sex	✓	✓	✓
Requests for dates	✓	✓	✓
Invasion of privacy in the bathroom, showers and/or sleeping quarters	✓	✓	
Unwanted gifts		✓	
Lewd or suggestive remarks		✓	✓
Sexual/sexist name calling		✓	✓
Sexual comments about me/her and/or my/her body		✓	✓
Sexual advances, suggestions or requests		✓	✓
Inappropriate touching	✓	✓	✓
Sexual touching	✓	✓	✓
Grabbing	✓	✓	✓
Forced hugging	✓	✓	✓
Forced kissing	✓	✓	✓
Sexual assault	✓	✓	✓
Complaints regarding unfair treatment have been minimized or ignored	✓	✓	✓

Recommendations for improving safety, health and inclusive and removing workplace hazards and risk factors were made based on the questionnaire responses and informed by the scholarly and practitioner literature review. These are outlined further in chapter six.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

Research Participant Demographics

Requests to participate in the research were sent to women known to be working in six Ontario municipalities and to two women who were previously employed as professional firefighters in Ontario. Through these recruitment efforts an approximate total of sixty-five women were given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire. This is an approximation as it does not take into account other women who may have become aware of the research project through women who were recruited directly. Twenty-four women completed the questionnaire between the dates of June 1 and July 9, 2012. This equates to an approximate response rate of 36.9 percent.

As discussed earlier, the number of women firefighters in Ontario is estimated to be 337, or three percent of the total number of professional firefighters. In this context, twenty-four questionnaire responses represent 7.1 percent of the total number of women firefighters in the Province. Although this reflects a small representation of the total study group, one must consider that the exact number of women professional firefighters in the province is unknown, the issues discussed in the research questionnaire are of a sensitive nature, and a directed approach to recruitment was undertaken rather than province-wide in order to minimize the risk of retribution or retaliation to the women who participated. It is also significant to note that this level of representation is consistent with the 2008 American study which had a survey response rate of just over five percent (Hulett, D.B., 2008, p. 1).

All of the women acknowledged that they were voluntarily participating in the research. As well, all of the women identified that they were currently or had previously worked as a professional firefighter in Ontario. Related to years of service, one woman identified less than one

year of service; four women identified one to four years of service; nine women identified five to nine years of service; and ten women identified more than ten years of service. The vast majority of women, 79.1 percent, had been a professional firefighter for at least five years and brought a great deal of experience to their responses to the research questions.

Differential Treatment

In response to the question, "Have you ever been treated differently in your work as a firefighter because of YOUR[4] gender?", fourteen women, or 58.3 percent, answered "yes". However, when a review of each individual questionnaire was undertaken, nineteen women identified specific behaviours that they had experienced, representing 79.1 percent of the respondents. It is interesting to note that five women experienced differential treatment in the workplace but did not identify it as being gender-based. In response to the question, "Have you ever witnessed (directly seen or heard) other WOMEN FIREFIGHTERS[5] being treated different because of their gender?", eighteen women, or 78.3 percent, answered "yes". Finally, in response to the question, "Have you been told by a co-worker of WOMEN FIREFIGHTERS[6] being treated differently because of their gender?", eighteen women, or 78.3 percent, answered "yes". The questions about directly witnessing or being told about differential treatment were included as additional ways to assess the work environment for third parties as well as the target. Witnessing and/or being told about safety and health hazards and risk factors contribute to a toxic work environment.

In summary, a clear majority of the women who participated in the research have been exposed to workplace hazards and risk factors related to their safety, health and inclusion,

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[4] The word "your" is written in capital letters as this is the way it appeared in the questionnaire. This was done for emphasis.
[5] The words "women firefighters" are written in capital letters as this is how they appeared in the questionnaire. This was done so to ensure that respondents were only relaying incidents experienced by their female colleagues, the subject of this research.
[6] Same rationale as note 5.

eighteen out of twenty-four women respondents, representing 78.3 percent. This is significant as it can pose a real risk to a municipality's success at recruiting and retaining women as firefighters. Additionally, it potentially leaves the municipality open to litigation related to workplace health and safety and human rights. The women firefighters' differential treatment responses are then analyzed as workplace hazards and risk factors in relation to each of the elements of safety, health and inclusion.

Exposure to Workplace Hazards and Risk Factors

Safety

Table 2 illustrates women`s reports of exposure to safety-related workplace hazards and risk factors.

Table 2: Exposure Rates to Safety-Related Workplace Hazards and Risk Factors

BEHAVIOUR	# EXPERIENCED	# DIRECTLY WITNESSED	# TOLD ABOUT
Equipment has been tampered with	2	2	1
Co-workers have purposefully put me/her in danger on the fire ground	1	0	0
Physical assault	1	0	2
Total Responses	**4**	**2**	**3**

These data show that twenty-four women experienced four incidents that posed a workplace hazard or risk to their safety. They directly witnessed, by seeing or hearing, two incidents of another woman firefighter's safety being placed at risk and they were told about three incidents where a woman firefighter's safety was placed at risk.

Although these data represent the lowest reports of the workplace hazards and risk factors identified in this study, the nature of these behaviours is severe and the level of risk to the worker is high. All three behaviours listed in Table 2 are examples of workplace violence as defined in the

Occupational Health and Safety Act. Municipalities should consider any level of reporting in this category of workplace hazard and risk factor to be unacceptable.

Health

Table 3 illustrates women firefighter's reports of exposure to health-related workplace hazards and risk factors.

Table 3: Exposure Rates to Health-Related Workplace Hazards and Risk Factors

BEHAVIOUR	# EXPERIENCED	# DIRECTLY WITNESSED	# TOLD ABOUT
Name calling	4	5	2
Verbal harassment	7	3	4
Belittling comments	11	4	3
Put downs, demeaning or offensive comments	12	3	3
Unwanted gifts	1	1	0
Total Responses	**35**	**16**	**12**

These data show that the twenty-four women who completed the research questionnaire experienced thirty-five incidents in the workplace that compromised their physical and/or mental health. They directly witnessed, by seeing or hearing, sixteen incidents where another woman firefighter experienced a risk to her health. They were told about twelve incidents where a woman firefighter's physical and/or mental health was placed at risk.

The behaviours listed in table three are examples of general workplace harassment. As noted in the literature review in chapter two, the effects of harassment on targets include physical and mental health symptoms that are stress-related, such as headaches, nausea, vomiting, digestive difficulties, anxiety, depression and sleep difficulties. Impacts for the worker and the organization include increased rates of absenteeism, leave of absence and staff turnover. This is costly for organizations in terms of benefits premiums, lost time, and retention. This is why municipalities should be concerned about these types of workplace hazards and risk factors. Municipalities

should also be aware that *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* obliges employers to protect

workers from this type of workplace harassment (Ministry of Labour, 2010, p. 3).

Inclusion

Table 4 illustrates women's reports of workplace hazards and risk factors that compromise

inclusion.

Table 4: Exposure Rates to Behaviours Compromising Inclusion

BEHAVIOUR	# EXPERIENCED	# DIRECTLY WITNESSED	# TOLD ABOUT
Physical abilities are questioned	11	6	3
Overall ability to do the job is questioned	8	6	5
Supervisor holds me/her to tougher performance standards	4	2	3
Not given training and development opportunities	6	0	1
Passed over for promotions	0	2	0
Unfair shift assignment	2	1	2
Male co-workers try to "take care of" or "protect" me/her	9	6	2
Only given certain jobs on the fire ground	5	5	1
Total Responses	**45**	**28**	**17**

Examining the data in table 4, one can see that the number of incidents is escalated. This means

that more women are experiencing, witnessing and/or being told about behaviours in the

workplace that compromise their inclusion. The twenty-four research participants experienced

forty-five incidents that compromised their inclusion. They directly witnessed, by seeing or

hearing, twenty-eight incidents of another woman's inclusion being compromised and were told

about an additional seventeen incidents.

Municipalities should be concerned about workplace hazards and risk factors in fire halls that are related to inclusion of women. This type of gender-based, exclusionary behaviour may be considered workplace harassment under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code,* as referred to in chapter three of this report. Lack of inclusion may lead women to leave the firefighting profession. Retention difficulties cost the municipality in time and dollars to recruit, screen and train new firefighters. Future recruitment may prove difficult for municipalities as information spreads in the community about the negative experiences of women firefighters in their work environments and the municipality's reputation as an inclusive employer becomes tarnished. Municipalities that become aware of exclusionary behaviours and practices and fail to take timely and appropriate action may risk litigation under human rights and health and safety legislation. Damages sought in these types of litigations can be costly to municipalities as in the case of Windsor, Ontario, discussed earlier in this report.

When asked to rate their department's level of inclusion of women firefighters on a five point scale, six women, or 25 percent, rated their department as "Excellent"; eight women, or 33.3 percent, rated their department as "Very good"; five women, or 20.8 percent, rated their department as "Good"; three women, or 12.5 percent, rated their department as "Fair"; and, two women, or 8.3 percent, rated their department's level of inclusion as "Poor". Thus, women's perceptions of their work environments, as related to inclusion, are favourable. Overall, nineteen out of twenty-four women, or 79.1 percent of the respondents rated their department's inclusion of women firefighters at the level of "Good" or better. This is encouraging, although contradictory, given the high numbers of compromising incidents related to women's inclusion. One might speculate that women are viewing their experiences on an individual, rather than organizational level in order to sustain themselves in their profession. This relates back to commentary by Fitzgerald in her 1993 study, referenced in the literature review in chapter two, that women in firefighting are expected to accept whatever harassment they experience (Fitzgerald, 1993, p.

1072). The women personalize the harassment rather than placing responsibility on the organization that creates and supports the non-inclusive environment.

Intersections of Safety and/or Health and/or Inclusion

Table 5 illustrates women's reports of exposure to workplace hazards and risk factors related to at least two of the elements of safety, health and inclusion. The behaviours in Table 5 written in bold type are associated with hazards and risk factors of all three elements in the conceptual framework for this research. The majority of the behaviours listed in the research questionnaire, twenty-six out of forty-two, are workplace hazards and risk factors that jeopardize women's safety and/or health and/or inclusion. Eleven of the above-listed behaviours jeopardize all three elements.

Table 5: Exposure Rates to Workplace Hazards and Risk Factors Related to Safety and/or Health and/or Inclusion

BEHAVIOUR	# EXPERIENCED	# DIRECTLY WITNESSED	# TOLD ABOUT
Ill-fitting equipment	11	2	2
Ignored	7	4	3
Given the silent treatment	6	2	3
Isolated	5	4	2
Hostile notes, written material or text messages	2	2	4
Offensive or intimidating phone calls	0	0	6
Bullying	**8**	**3**	**1**
Hazing	**1**	**2**	**1**
Intimidating or offensive gestures, jokes or remarks	**11**	**3**	**0**
Displaying or circulating offensive pictures or materials	5	3	0
Pornography in the workplace	9	4	1

BEHAVIOUR	# EXPERIENCED	# DIRECTLY WITNESSED	# TOLD ABOUT
Explicit sexual discussions	10	2	1
Requests for sex	**8**	**0**	**0**
Requests for dates	**6**	**0**	**2**
Invasion of privacy in the bathroom, showers and/or sleeping quarters	5	2	0
Lewd or suggestive remarks	8	2	3
Sexual / sexist name calling	5	5	1
Sexual comments about me/her and/or my/her body	5	6	1
Sexual advances, suggestions or requests	8	1	3
Inappropriate touching	7	1	2
Sexual touching	**3**	**0**	**0**
Grabbing	**5**	**0**	**0**
Forced hugging	**2**	**0**	**2**
Forced kissing	**2**	**0**	**0**
Sexual assault	**1**	**0**	**2**
Complaints regarding unfair treatment have been minimized or ignored	**5**	**1**	**2**
Total Responses	145	49	42
Total Responses of hazards and risk factors related to safety, health and inclusion	**52**	**9**	**10**

When table five is examined, it is clear this is the area of greatest exposure to workplace hazards

and risk factors. Where at least two of the elements of safety, health and inclusion were placed at

risk, the twenty-four research participants experienced 145 incidents of workplace hazards and

risk factors. They directly witnessed, by seeing and hearing, forty-nine incidents directed at

another female firefighter and they were told about an additional forty-two incidents. Where

safety, health and inclusion were all jeopardized, the twenty-four women research participants

experienced fifty-two incidents. They directly witnessed nine incidents and were told about an additional ten incidents.

In the final section of the research questionnaire, women gave their suggestions as to strategies municipalities could use to increase women's inclusion in firefighting. These suggestions will be considered in the recommendations section of this report.

Summary of Findings

The twenty-four women firefighters who completed the research questionnaire identified workplace hazards and risk factors related to safety, health and inclusion. When each of the three elements was analyzed separately it was found that the lowest rates of exposure were related to safety hazards and risks. The highest exposure rates were related to inclusion, although the majority of the women respondents rated their department's level of inclusion of women as either "good", "very good" or "excellent". When the hazards and risk factors that jeopardized more than one of the elements of safety, health and inclusion were examined, then the rate of exposure increased considerably, with the women experiencing these hazards and risk factors at a rate three times higher than any of the individual elements considered on their own.

The responses in all areas of workplace hazards and risk factors suggest that there are real issues for women firefighters, in at least some of the fire services in Ontario. This should be very concerning for decision-makers and leaders at the local and provincial levels as the data confirms the suggestions in the literature review, that women firefighters at significant risk of having their safety, health and inclusion jeopardized in their work environment. There are sufficient disclosures to suggest that municipal fire services that place women's safety and health at risk, and compromise their inclusion, could be contributing to the low number of women professional firefighters in Ontario by negatively affecting municipalities' ability to recruit and retain women as professional firefighters.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research six themes emerge as the basis for recommendations for municipalities to consider if they wish to increase the representation of women in their fire services. The recommendations are presented here without a priority of importance. For each recommendation, direct quotes from women who completed the research questionnaire are included in italics as part of the rationale for the recommended change.

Recommendation 1: Policy and Procedure

Municipalities should ensure that all policies are consistent with current provincial legislation related to occupational health and safety, human rights and workplace accommodation, and are written in a way that promotes the physical and psychological safety and health of all firefighters and the inclusion of women firefighters in particular. Policies need to be included that address workplace issues that relate to women specifically, for example, accommodation during pregnancy. For each policy there should be up to date standard operating procedures. All policies and procedures should be well known by employees at all levels of the fire service and should be followed consistently.

Rationale

A number of the women who completed questionnaires referred to issues that are related to policy and procedure. The two most common policy areas related to sexual harassment in the workplace and accommodation during pregnancy. Sexual harassment is addressed specifically in the fifth recommendation to be discussed later in this chapter. In relation to pregnancy, the women identified the need for clear policy that addresses the way firefighting and pregnancy is handled, including how duties are determined for accommodation of pregnant firefighters. For example, respondents made the following comments.

"Have a more appropriate policy for pregnant firefighters."

"Consider women's issues and be better prepared for pregnancy leave … Females don't know what to expect when these things happen. We are dealt with on a 'case by case' basis."

"Better jobs while pregnant – more inclusive work. Not as separated from crews on the floor."

"My municipality should top up maternity leave."

"Offer better modified duties for pregnant firefighters and top up for maternity leave … more benefit coverage for firefighters needing medical assistance getting pregnant …"

Of the twenty-four women who completed the questionnaires, five of them made recommendations related to policy improvements and pregnancy so clearly this is a policy issue that municipalities need to consider. One woman also identified the need for provincial policy related to firefighter health and safety and cancer, to include women's cancers specifically.

Recommendation #2: Properly-Fitting Uniforms, Gear and Equipment

Municipalities should contract with a supplier for firefighter uniforms, equipment and gear who is able to easily accommodate women's sizes.

Rationale

Properly fitting gear and equipment is important to firefighters as it protects them while doing their work. When women do not have properly fitting gear and equipment it puts them in danger and can leave them feeling like outsiders. This is an issue of safety and inclusion. Eleven women who responded to the questionnaire identified ill-fitting gear as a problem in their workplace. Their comments included the following statements.

"Allow for equipment that fits appropriately, not take it personally when requests are forwarded."

"Offer the appropriate fitting gear before having to ask for 'women's' gear and clothing instead of 'men's'."

"Better fitting gear such as fatigues, gloves … for myself I've been at a fire for hours and bled (menstruation) through my bunker pants and it is not as if there is a small size guy whose gear I can borrow while I wash mine … so smelly dirty gear I had to wear for my shift."

When responding to the survey, eleven out of twenty-four women identified that they have experienced ill-fitting equipment; two had directly witnessed another woman experiencing ill-fitting equipment and two had been told about other women firefighters having this problem. Equipment and gear are fundamental to the job of firefighting. This is a significant issue that municipalities need to address to promote inclusivity of women firefighters, and to ensure their safety. It is noteworthy that two of the women identified that the way their municipality has addressed the equipment issue was something they did well to be inclusive of women.

"Understanding of my needs for different gear on occasion and willing to spend the time and money to equip me properly."

"Started paying attention to PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) issues."

Recommendation 3: Fire Hall Capital Improvements

Municipalities should make capital improvements to their fire halls to build dedicated women's quarters for washrooms, showering and sleeping.

Rationale

Five of the women who completed the questionnaire indicated that their privacy had been invaded in the washroom, shower or sleeping quarters; two indicated that they had directly witnessed the invasion of another woman's privacy in this way. This was articulated in the narrative section of the questionnaire as an issue of comfort and ease in the work place where women are the minority based on gender.

"Provide equal access to female washrooms/showers in stations. Not all stations accommodate females."

"SO SO reactive. I have been a firefighter for 13 years. I was in one station for 10 years where there were no female quarters or facilities. The year after I was transferred they put in a shower for women. Made me feel very disrespected and unwanted."

"The female change rooms/washrooms are not all up to standards in all stations, but I know our department is gradually making the needed changes as funds allow. They accommodate us, in the meantime, by not placing women in stations with inappropriate facilities."

"Having women's SPECIFIC change room and washroom at all the stations so that guys don't walk in on them (public washroom with lockers is NOT a women's change room)."

"Most progressive cities are building fire stations that have private bunk rooms so that individuals can rest there for their next calls and change in private when we get a call to respond to. As it is now, everyone has their rest area together (and especially in the common areas) it is not and both parties are ill at ease, to some degree some more than others. When a woman fills in at a station where there are not usually women working, then it is a BIG DEAL where everyone is going to rest ... and 'CURTAINS' dividing beds is not private despite some 'designer's' odd notions."

Having a built environment that includes women's washrooms, showers and sleeping quarters sends a message that the service is open and prepared to employ women as equal colleagues. It is showing respect for the fact that not all men and women are comfortable with gender-neutral facilities and need an increased level of privacy at times. Investing in these types of capital improvements could go a long way to recruiting, and especially retaining women firefighters.

Recommendation 4: Valid Physical Fitness and Endurance Testing

Municipalities should review their requirements for pre-hire physical fitness and endurance testing to ensure that they do not unjustifiably discriminate against women applicants. Testing standards then need to be applied consistently to all applicants. Furthermore, to increase women's opportunities of success in the testing, and thereby their inclusion in the service, municipalities should make available physical fitness training suggestions for all applicants that are gender-specific.

Rationale

Firefighting is physically demanding work that requires a certain level of physical strength and endurance. The Ontario Office of the Fire Marshal makes the following comments about physical fitness and endurance requirements for firefighter applicants. "Although qualifications may vary, a hiring municipality or fire service may require that you … be capable of handling

intense and sustained physical effort … undergo timed, physically demanding job-related performance tests" (Ontario Office of the Fire Marshal, *Becoming a Firefighter*, 2010). The Supreme Court of Canada in its 1999 decision in the case of *British Columbia (Public Service Employee Relations Commission) v. British Columbia Government and Service Employees Union,* outlines the stipulations that employers must follow when establishing job-related standards, practices and/or policies. (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2007). In this case, Tawney Meiroin, a female forest firefighter, alleged that the amended performance standards discriminated against women after failing an aerobic running test she was required to take after three years of successful on the job performance (Ibid). The Supreme Court of Canada upheld the appeal and established a unified test for defences based on the premise of Bona Fide Occupational Requirements and Bona Fide Justifications, meaning that if a standard, practice or policy is discriminatory on one or more protected grounds, then it is justified given the nature of the occupation (Ibid). The test involves answering the following four questions,

> Is there a standard, policy or practice that discriminates on the basis of a prohibited ground?
>
> Did the employer adopt the standard, policy or practice for a purpose rationally connected to the performance of the job?
>
> Did the employer adopt the particular standard, policy or Practice in an honest and good faith belief that it was necessary in order to fulfill that legitimate work-related purpose?
>
> Is the standard, policy or practice reasonably necessary in order to fulfill that legitimate work-related purpose? (Ibid).

When examining their physical fitness and endurance standards and testing, municipalities should use the *Meiorin* case as a reference to ensure they are in compliance. Once they are satisfied that their testing is appropriate, applicable to the job and not purposefully and unjustifiably discriminatory on the basis of gender, then it should be administered and scored consistently.

When standards are lowered to accommodate women this can create additional problems in the workplace. Not only does this practice put workers at risk, it is more difficult for the women who have met the valid standards and legitimately earned their place in the profession. Tension around this particular issue was articulated by women in their questionnaire responses.

"They allow women to graduate despite failing the standards they established and force the men to adhere to."

"They will go so far as to hire women who fail testing, ie: physical testing, interviews."

"Hire the right ones rather than just any one. Makes it difficult when the women really can't do the job. Looks bad."

"Not bend the rules to hire incompetent females! And lowering the standard is absolutely disgraceful! Physically they should be doing what guys do, but they lowered the standards some years back. I've seen many excellent females on the job I'd happily work with, but sadly, there are a bunch that have NO BUSINESS being on the trucks!!!"

"Ensure the women they hire are physically up for the job."

"They should apply the standards strictly that they developed so that females who fail should fail. The women who honestly deserve to be in the service look bad due to the few that are 'pushed through' the training in order to meet a certain percentage."

"Have stricter hiring requirements to ensure that the women that do get the job, are capable of doing the job because when they aren't (just hired for a quota) it makes the life of the other women on the job harder (in defending women's place on the job and capabilities)."

As an alternative to lowering the physical fitness and endurance standards or requirements in order to allow women to pass, pre-test physical fitness training programs can be offered that are gender-specific. Municipalities could offer information sessions about firefighting that are women-specific, including information and demonstrations related to the fitness and endurance testing, and specific strength and aerobic training suggestions that women could use on their own to increase their chances of passing the tests. This type of pre-test training has been used in some municipalities in the United States and has shown to increase women's success in meeting the fitness requirements (Hulett, D.B., 2008, p. 6).

Recommendation 5: Workplace Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Response

   Municipalities should adopt a comprehensive program to address the workplace hazards and risk factors associated with gender-based harassment and discrimination, with particular attention to workplace bullying, general harassment and sexual harassment. Such a program should contain preventative measures, including policies, procedures, employee code of conduct, risk assessment, education, and training at all organizational levels within the fire service. The program should also include response strategies for reporting and investigating gender-related hazards and risk factors as well as appropriate and consistent disciplinary action for offenders.

Rationale

   In relation to this recommendation the women who responded to the questionnaire made a number of different comments and suggestions.

"Have an information session of a male/female firefighter team visit the stations and take questions on an informal level and give information to firefighters."

"Have that informal team visit the crews. Firefighters respond best to an informal session whereby they are not pointed at or accused."

"Train officers to be inclusive. Example, don't pull the crew into the kitchen to have a discussion about dos and don'ts with having a female in the station while the female is in the other room. Have a discussion with all members to discuss as a group."

"Officers need to learn what is appropriate and what is not and more importantly how to deal with issues and not just allow them to happen, it is changing up top but not on the floor."

"To be more vigilant in the code of conduct surrounding sexual harassment, training needs identified, special requirements (facilities, washroom facilities on scene), promoting healthy attitudes toward women on the job from the top down."

"The harassment policy was presented to the City, however then the presenter said some of the 'hazing' was acceptable because of the firefighter culture. You cannot allow it for one municipal division and not the other. It is either OK everywhere or not OK anywhere. Make a decision and be firm. The fact the presenter made exclusion for the fire service, I believe, makes some of the firefighters think that other portions of the harassment policy don't apply, because the fire service is 'different'."

"Mostly training and actually follow through on any discipline."

"I think they need to train their senior staff how to be more professional overall. If they are still seen dating, making sexual advances etc. toward female firefighters, then it sends a message to all firefighters that it is still OK. To leave a 'sexual predator' in a position of power, one who controls who gets promoted and who does not, and knowingly turns a blind eye to it, is NOT right. Ignoring unprofessional behaviour, making excuses for it, and backing a senior member of the command team is disgraceful."

Given the survey data produced by this research project, municipalities must give priority to preventing and addressing gender-based bullying, harassment and sexual harassment in fire services.

Recommendation 6: Comprehensive Study of Workplace Hazards and Risk Factors for Women Firefighters

Leaders at the local government and provincial levels should work together to undertake a comprehensive study to identify the workplace hazards and risk factors that women firefighters in Ontario face related to their safety, health and inclusion.

Rationale

This research project provides a glimpse into the lived experiences of women professional firefighters in Ontario of workplace bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. The data collected from twenty-four women firefighters working in six municipalities provides sufficient evidence of the presence of workplace hazards and risk factors related to safety, health and inclusion. Further study is needed in order to fully identify the extent to which women firefighters are experiencing work environments that are unsafe, unhealthy and non-inclusion. Additionally, the lived experiences of women working as volunteer firefighters in Ontario municipalities are an area which requires study. A comprehensive study would allow leaders and decision-makers to know exactly how many women firefighters there are working in Ontario, what gender-based workplace hazards and risk factors they are experiencing at work, and what interventions are required.

Summary

The six recommendations made are practical steps that municipalities can take to address the workplace hazards and risk factors that this research has identified and which compromise the safety, health and inclusion of women firefighters. These recommendations are a synthesis of the suggestions made by the twenty-four Ontario women firefighters who completed the online research questionnaire. Safety and health hazards and risks are addressed through the recommendations related to policies and procedures, properly fitting gear and equipment, capital improvements in fire halls to accommodate women's needs for gender-specific washrooms, showers and sleeping quarters, physical fitness and testing, prevention and response strategies to address issues related to gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace and a comprehensive, provincial study to further examine this issue . Inclusion is promoted through the adoption of all six recommendations. The intent of the recommendations is not to give special treatment to the women firefighters but to address the problems identified. Effective responses will assist in preventing further risk to women firefighters and to create and ensure equal opportunities for women to pursue and excel in their chosen career.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

There are low numbers of women in Canada who choose professional firefighting as a career, just over three percent. This research project has attempted to determine whether the women's work environment could be a contributing factor related to their safety, health and inclusion. Twenty-four current and previous women firefighters in Ontario, through an anonymous, online questionnaire, disclosed that they had experienced, directly witnessed or had been told about workplace hazards and risk factors for women firefighters related to safety, health and inclusion. The most significant results were noted among the behaviours that compromised at least two, if not all three of these elements. Based on these results, it can be asserted that work environments that are unsafe, unhealthy and non-inclusive may be contributing to the low number of women firefighters in Ontario. If women firefighters have lived experience that their safety and health are at risk, and their inclusion is compromised, they may leave the profession. One of the women made reference to this in a follow up interview, saying, "We hire women but we just can't keep them. They either go on stress leave or quit".

By identifying workplace hazards and risks factors, municipalities, as the employer, can put strategies in place to prevent these issues from occurring and take positive action to ameliorate their negative consequences. Effective strategies protect the safety and health of <u>all</u> firefighters and promote the inclusion of women specifically. Moreover, at the organizational level adoption of the recommendations contained within this report begins to address the costs reflected in high absenteeism and employee turnover, reduced effectiveness, productivity and performance. Given these research findings, legal, ethical and social justice issues also must be given significant consideration.

The recommendations resulting from this research are practical. They relate to the development and review of policies and procedures; the necessity for properly fitting equipment, gear and uniforms for women firefighters; built environment in fire halls that contains gender-specific washrooms, change rooms, showers and sleeping quarters; non-discriminatory, standardized physical fitness testing for both men and women applicants; a comprehensive program to address issues related to gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace; and further study on this issue. These recommendations are concrete, specific and attainable for municipalities. Their implementation requires resources, both time and money, and effective risk management, leadership and tough choices by decision-makers. The long term benefits are work environments for all firefighters that are safe, healthy and inclusive, and municipal fire services that are professional, diverse, and representative of the community they serve.

One of the women who participated in this research said it best with the following statement:

"Understand there is a difference but that doesn't mean we are any less a firefighter. We don't want to be treated as 'one of the boys', simply respected.".

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Appendix A: Introductory Research Cover Letter

June 1, 2012

Dear Firefighter,

I am contacting women professional firefighters in Ontario to voluntarily complete an anonymous and confidential online questionnaire. My name is Heidy Van Dyk and I am a full-time student in the Master of Public Administration (Local Government) Program at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research for my Major Research Paper on women's experiences as professional firefighters in municipalities in Ontario. Specifically I am interested in learning about their experience as women working as firefighters, their impressions of their work environments and their ideas for municipalities, as their employers, to make their work environments safe, healthy and inclusive of women.

I hope you will take the time to complete the online questionnaire through Survey Monkey by clicking on the link at the bottom of this page. It should not take any more than 15 minutes of your time.

Your privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance to me. The questionnaire is to be completed anonymously. You will not be asked to give any identifying information, including your name, the name of your fire department or the name of the municipality where you live and/or work. All answers will be aggregated and anonymous. The data will only be used for analysis and the writing of my Major Research Paper. The completed questionnaires will be shredded and electronic files deleted after the report is written.

Some of the questions ask you to recall any experiences that may be sensitive to you and which may bring up memories or feelings that are uncomfortable or difficult. If this happens I encourage you to contact your confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider or the Assaulted Women's Helpline, www.awhl.org or 1-866-863-0511.

Please consider forwarding this email to other women you know who are currently working as professional firefighters in Ontario, or women who have worked as professional firefighters and have left the service for whatever reason.

If you would be willing to participate in a follow up confidential interview, or if you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me at hvandyk@uwo.ca.

Please take the time now to complete the survey. The survey deadline for response is July 9, 2012

Thank you for participating in this research. I hope my research will contribute to efforts that encourage women to pursue careers in fire services.

Sincerely,

Heidy Van Dyk
Master of Public Administration (Local Government Program)Candidate
Department of Political Science
The University of Western Ontario

To proceed to the questionnaire click here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5PNQRW8

Appendix B: Research Questionnaire

1. By completing the following questionnaire I acknowledge that I am giving consent to participate in this research.

◯ Agree

2. Are you a woman currently working as a professional firefighter in Ontario? OR
Are you a woman who has previously worked as a professional firefighter in Ontario?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you are a volunteer firefighter please answer "No" to the above question.

If you answered "No" to the above question, I thank you for your interest in this research, however, please do not continue with the questionnaire and submit now.

3. Years of Service (click the appropriate box)

☐ Less than one year

☐ One year to four years

☐ Five years to nine years

☐ More than ten years

4. Have you ever been treated differently in your work as a firefighter because of YOUR gender?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Have you ever witnessed (directly seen or heard) other WOMEN FIREFIGHTERS being treated differently because of their gender?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Have you been told by a co-worker of WOMEN FIREFIGHTERS being treated differently because of their gender?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you answered "Yes" to any of questions 4, 5 and 6, please proceed to question 7.
If you answered "No" to questions 4, 5 and 6, please proceed to question 8.

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7. Please explain by choosing from the list of behaviours below. Check all that apply in the appropriate column(s).

	Experienced	Witnessed	Told About
Physical abilities are questioned	○	○	○
Overall ability to do the job is questioned	○	○	○
Supervisor holds me/her to tougher performance standards	○	○	○
Not given training and development opportunities	○	○	○
Passed over for promotions	○	○	○
Unfair shift assignment	○	○	○
Ill-fitting equipment	○	○	○
Equipment has been tampered with	○	○	○
Male co-workers try to "take care of" or "protect" me/her	○	○	○
Only given certain jobs on the fire ground	○	○	○
Co-workers have purposefully put me/her in danger on the fire ground	○	○	○
Ignored	○	○	○
Given the silent treatment	○	○	○
Isolated	○	○	○
Name calling	○	○	○
Verbal harassment	○	○	○
Belittling comments	○	○	○
Put downs, demeaning or offensive comments	○	○	○
Hostile notes, written material or text messages	○	○	○
Offensive or intimidating phone calls	○	○	○
Bullying	○	○	○
Hazing	○	○	○
Intimidating or offensive gestures, jokes or remarks	○	○	○
Physical assault	○	○	○
Displaying or circulating	○	○	○

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offensive pictures or materials	○	○	○
Pornography in the workplace	○	○	○
Explicit sexual discussions	○	○	○
Requests for sex	○	○	○
Requests for dates	○	○	○
Invasion of privacy in the bathroom, showers and/or sleeping quarters	○	○	○
Unwanted gifts	○	○	○
Lewd or suggestive remarks	○	○	○
Sexual / sexist name calling	○	○	○
Sexual comments about me/her and/or my/her body	○	○	○
Sexual advances, suggestions or requests	○	○	○
Inappropriate touching	○	○	○
Sexual touching	○	○	○
Grabbing	○	○	○
Forced hugging	○	○	○
Forced kissing	○	○	○
Sexual assault	○	○	○
Complaints regarding unfair treatment have been minimized or ignored	○	○	○

8. How do you rate your department's level of inclusion of women firefighters?

☐ Excellent

☐ Very good

☐ Good

☐ Fair

☐ Poor

9. What does your municipality DO WELL to be inclusive of women firefighters?

[text box]

Creating a Safe, Healthy and Inclusive Work Environment for Women

10. What could your municipality DO BETTER to be inclusive of women firefighters?

11. What does your municipality NOT DO THAT YOU THINK IT SHOULD do to be inclusive of women firefighters?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research by completing the questionnaire.

Creating a Safe, Healthy and Inclusive Work Environment for Women