

August 27, 2025

Honourable Lisa Dempster
Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Via Email: lisadempster@gov.nl.ca

Dear Minister Dempster:

Subject: Immediate Inclusion of Wildland Firefighters in Presumptive Cancer Coverage

The devastating wildfires sweeping across Newfoundland and Labrador have cost our province dearly - the loss of entire communities, families displaced, and countless lives upended. In the middle of this crisis, our firefighters (career, volunteer, and wildland) are putting everything on the line. They are breathing toxic smoke, enduring relentless exposure, and carrying out dangerous work to protect others. Their sacrifices have been extraordinary, but their protection by the government remains anything but.

In 2016, the Provincial Government introduced presumptive cancer coverage for career and volunteer firefighters. While this was long overdue, it was unacceptable then - and it remains unacceptable now - that the province's own Wildland Firefighters (Conservation Officers) were excluded. These are the very workers on the front lines of the wildfires raging through our province today. They are breathing the same smoke, facing the same carcinogens, and putting their bodies and futures at the same risk. To treat them as less deserving is an insult to their service.

To continue denying these firefighters the same presumptive coverage extended to others is unacceptable, and our Union will not quietly accept this inequity. The Government has an obligation to correct this omission.

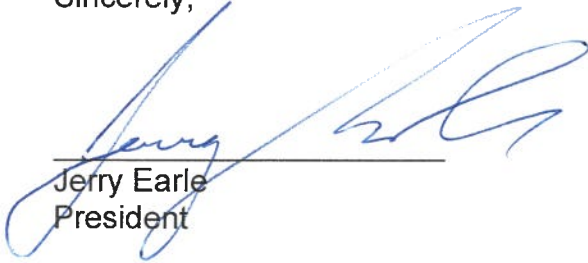
The time to right this wrong is now. The government must immediately move to extend presumptive cancer coverage to all Wildland Firefighters employed by the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. There is no rational, moral, or ethical argument for delay.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are depending on these firefighters today. They should not have to spend tomorrow worrying about whether their government values them enough to protect their health.

Let me be absolutely clear, our Union will not stand by while the province's own firefighters remain excluded from protections afforded to others. If this injustice is not corrected, we will make it an issue - loudly, publicly, and persistently - until fairness is achieved.

It is time for action, and we demand it.

Sincerely,



Jerry Earle
President

JE/dl

cc. The Honourable John Hogan, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador