



For Immediate Release
November 1, 2017

Women's Firefighter Conference Highlights the Importance of Gender Balance and Diversity

--Women and men working together making the fire service stronger through diversity

LONDON – Women in the fire service will receive hands-on-training on Friday and Saturday to advance their skills in fire attack, fire assessment, hose line management, automobile extrication, fire suppression, and strength and conditioning – all at the London Fire Training Complex as part of the London Fire Department's hosting of the 2017 Fire Service Women Ontario Conference.

These sessions focus on physical training, however, they will be complemented with classroom seminars on gender, workplace, ethnic diversity and other firefighting related topics. Women and men from the fire service industry across Canada and the United States will examine the need to reflect modern community demographics when only 4 per cent of Canada's fire service members are women.

"We realize that by applying the mission statement of Fire Service Women Ontario to encourage, promote and advance women in the fire service not only benefits women, but all members of the fire service," said Louise-Hine Schmidt, President and founding member of Fire Service Women Ontario (FSWO), and a firefighter with Ottawa Fire Services for the past 18 years.

"We will tackle the challenge of how women can integrate more seamlessly and effectively in a male-populated industry when so few women are actually in the workforce," she added. "Although many efforts have aimed to increase the presence of women in the Canadian fire service, the numbers are still lower than every other Emergency Service including law enforcement, paramedicine, and the military. As women's roles in society have evolved towards equity and gender balance in the workplace, the Canadian fire service remains male populated with no sign of increasing in the near future."

The Fire Service Women Ontario conference will also recognize outstanding achievement by some its members including the President's Trailblazer Award which will be given to local London firefighter Allison Vickerd on Friday evening for her pioneering efforts in educating, empowering and encouraging women in the fire service across Canada.

As well on Friday evening, the keynote speaker Cynthia Ross Tustin will reflect on her experience in a leadership role predominantly over men, as Ontario's first full time female fire chief, for Essa Township, and vice president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Ms. Tustin is a married mother of three children and a registered critical care nurse.

Fire Service Women Ontario was first created in 2009 as a not-for-profit organization to operate an apprenticeship program for young women between the ages of 15 and 19. With the overwhelming success and demand for this program, the mission of the organization grew to provide support and mentorship for all women in the fire service industry.

Media are invited to the Friday afternoon hands-on-training sessions as well as the key note address and award presentation on Friday evening:

Friday, November 3

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM – Hands-on-Training

London Fire Training Complex

PLEASE NOTE-THERE IS NO PARKING --Shuttle service will go from the Best Western Lamplighter Inn

591 Wellington Road

London, ON

Award Presentation – 8:00 pm

Keynote Address -- 8:15 pm

Best Western Lamplighter Inn

For conference details, please visit www.fswow.ca

Media Contact: Susan Jones

613 983 4005

Sjones7624@gmail.com

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