



**MCKENZIE
CLEARWATER
FIRE DEPARTMENT**

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

"DEDICATION BEYOND FIREFIGHTING"

Deepest Gratitude

The Johnpaul George family is deeply grateful to MCFD and Pellatt United Firefighters (PUFF) for responding to a fire in their home in the early hours of a frosty January 13th.

Father and son were alerted by their dog and a fire alarm:

"We called 911 at about 4:15 a.m. and by 4:45 the first Clearwater-based fire truck arrived. From that moment on, fire crews worked tirelessly, spending nearly 12 hours."

Trevor Belair was first at the scene with Pumper 64, a Freightliner with powerful pumps for spraying water. Chief Dale Charbonneau and Deputy Chief Eion Henderson came next in Tanker 67, a Sterling Acterra that carries a large volume of water.

Roused from sleep by the alarm on her pager, Coral Johnson was next at the scene. Wes Dutson, awakened by a call from Coral, followed in Rescue 61, a Dodge Ram supplied for forest fires and medical calls. Bree Haney, coming off a night shift at 6:30 a.m., joined directly from work. Finally, five PUFF firefighters, including Chief Barry Bennett, assisted under the Mutual Aid Agreement.

Says Wes, "My first thought when a structure call comes in at this hour is, 'Is there anybody home and did they make it out safe?'"

As firefighters arrived, the garage was engulfed in flame and spreading. With no hydrants in the area, crews typically take water from lakes. However, low levels and ice meant Wes and Eion had to shuttle water from Station Two in Keewatin.

Chief Charbonneau, as Incident Commander, directed an interior attack using Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA). Wes recalls, "Fire, concealed in the wall cavities, had entered into the second story extension." Bree, Wes and Trevor, using axes and poles, removed drywall and insulation to locate and stop the hidden fire. They rotated through the physically demanding work.

Mr. George is thankful, "In the middle of the emergency, [firefighters] ... were able to retrieve important belongings including my wallet and children's iPads. These items, especially our ID, made a huge difference in the weeks that followed."

With the fire extinguished, Dale and Trevor remained on site to investigate the cause. Others returned to the Clearwater Firehall to dry hoses, refill SCBA bottles, clean gear, and reset the trucks to be ready for the next call!

While the family are working through insurance and rebuilding, Johnpaul says this experience:

"Highlights how important it is to ensure our fire teams are properly supported. Increased funding, improved equipment, and stronger resources will help these crews continue to protect the many homes and cabins in our region."



Firefighter Coral Johnson battles the blazing home



George Family home prior to January blaze



Chief Charbonneau conferring with Pellatt United Firefighters

PART TWO – IN-HOUSE TRAINING

From rookie to rescue: firefighter training at MCFD

MCFD in-house training is led by Fire Chief Dale Charbonneau, Deputy Fire Chief Eion Henderson, and Captain Todd Skene. These senior firefighters are certified by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to signoff on member training.

Dale is proud, “MCFD is fortunate to have a strong core of young firefighters who drive our in-house training with enthusiasm.”

Firefighter, Wes Dutson, says in turn, “Between Todd and Dale, we are fortunate to have two of the best trainers we could ask for. Their many years of experience mean they always have real-life examples.”

The in-house training takes place every other Monday. Materials covered are extensive and cover topics like:

- » Fire Behaviour
- » Forcible Entry
- » Firefighter Survival
- » Establishing & Transferring Command

In 2022, Ontario passed legislation that firefighters need to be *certified*—not just trained. Departments were given 4 years to get to NFPA standards. This means that by July 1, 2026 all firefighters need NFPA 1001: Level 1 and Level 2—the “fully trained firefighter.”

This legislation creates challenges. Previously, departments like MCFD would take 5–8 years to train volunteers. Now new members have to dedicate more of their free time. This also puts an increased training burden on instructors and a financial burden on departments as small organizations turn to outsourcing.

Despite this, MCFD is on target to have firefighters certified this summer. The next step will be training to



Firefighters training on a simulated housefire

NFP Technical Standards, such as Auto Extrication and Ice/Water Rescue; deadline July 1, 2028. And as Todd notes, “Excellent training is a key way to retain firefighters, which is one of the reasons we keep a dedicated core team.”

The training can also be an opportunity for team building and fun. Bree Lenoard: “My favourite training is boat practice. We go from aiming the hose at a target to a water fight and someone ends up drenched!”

You too can become a MCFD Firefighter!
All training and equipment will be provided.
Email: info@mckenzieclearwaterfire.ca.

FIREHALL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Structural Assessment of Current Firehall

This winter the MCFD Board hired KGS Group to do an assessment of its current Clearwater Bay Firehall. The goal was to determine if the 1993 building could be cost-effectively upgraded and connected to a new addition, or if it would be more practical to demolish it and build a new one.

The assessment included a site visit by a KGS engineer on January 5, 2026, along with a review of available documents and some initial structural analysis.

Several issues were found with the current building. For example, the concrete floor has shifted over time, causing drainage problems. Water does not flow to the floor drains and instead collects along the walls, which can lead to damage and mould.

The building also lacks proper ventilation and gas detection systems, which are important for both occupants and vehicle operation. In addition, the structure was not designed to handle the extra weight of snow buildup that could result from adding an addition. Key structural elements, such as roof trusses, wall studs, and the foundation may not be strong enough for this.

Most importantly, under the 2024 Ontario Building Code, firehalls must meet higher standards as “Post Disaster Buildings.”



Conceptual drawing for illustrative purposes only



Firehalls are considered essential buildings that must function during emergencies. The current firehall drawings do not show what design loads were used or whether the building was classified as a post-disaster building. Moreover, the requirements for post-disaster buildings have changed since it was built around 1993.

Conclusion:

The existing firehall is a low-cost structure that is nearing the end of its lifespan and would need major repairs and upgrades. These costs would likely be higher than demolishing it and building a new facility.

Given these conclusions, the MCFD Board is evaluating repurposing the existing firehall as a storage facility.



Chief Dale training Tyler Stotts & Trevor Belair on head & neck stabilization



**MCKENZIE
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Welcome new Board Member: Jim Vis!

Jim's connection to the lake began in 1975, when his parents rented a cabin at Granite Lake for their family of eight. They fell in love with the area and purchased a property on Deception Bay the following year.

In 1994, as their family grew, his parents acquired the neighbouring property. Today, Jim and his

wife, Meghan, own and enjoy that property with their children, Adam, Brendan, and Lauren.

This year marks Jim's 50th summer at the lake!

After a 30-year career as a professional engineer and entrepreneur in Canadian commercial agriculture, Jim retired in 2022. He now consults part-time, but is happiest behind the helm of his boat or working on a lake project.

Inspired by lake neighbours and MCFD Board Members, David Reid and Rick Suche, Jim says, "I cannot think of a better way to give back than by volunteering for the McKenzie Clearwater Fire Department Board. I was honored to be invited."



Volunteer Firefighters and Board Members needed

No experience necessary—just a desire to make a positive impact in cottage country.

Email info@mckenzieclearwaterfire.ca

Response report MCFD: 105 Incidents in 2025

7

STRUCTURE
FIRE

26

OUTDOOR
FIRE

16

FALSE
ALARMS

20

MOTOR VEHICLE
ACCIDENT

26

MEDICAL
CALLS

5

DAY BURNING
COMPLAINT

5

OTHER
CALLS

SAVE THE DATE! MCFD 2026 AGM: SUNDAY, JUNE 28 AT 10AM

Donation Form

Currently half of MCFD funding comes from donations and fundraising. Please give generously.

Name of Donor(s): _____

Name for Official Donation Receipt: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Cottage Location: _____

Donation Amount: \$

Mail to: MCFD, Box 20, Clearwater Bay, ON P0X 1S0 or **make an online donation at mckenzieclearwaterfire.ca**. Thank you!



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