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NDP fighting to improve wildfire firefighters' pensions and retirement

OTTAWA — On Monday, NDP Public Safety critic Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford) passed a motion calling on the government to classify wildfire firefighters as firefighters under the National Occupation Classification (NOC). As of now, wildfire firefighters aren't considered "firefighters" under the NOC, meaning they get a lower pension and have a later retirement age.

MacGregor says this must change so that all firefighters get the compensation and support they deserve.

"Last summer, we saw firsthand how much we need wildfire firefighters. While we saw the worst wildfires on record across the country, these brave people, were fighting to keep our communities and homes safe," said MacGregor. "Despite their bravery and work, the government doesn't consider wildfire firefighters as 'firefighters'. It's a disgrace. Firefighters and wildfire firefighters alike deserve to be treated with respect and compensated for their work that saves lives."

In not being classified as a “firefighter” under the NOC, wildfire firefighters are eligible to retire five years later than those who are. They also receive a lower interest rate on their pension.

NDP MP Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster), in working with the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) initially brought forward the motion to classify wildfire firefighters as firefighters; MP MacGregor took on the work after becoming the NDP public safety critic.

“For generations, the Conservatives and Liberals haven’t shown up for front-line workers and those who tackle emergencies and that’s impacting firefighters when they retire,” said Julian. “But New Democrats believe the people who keep our communities safe should be treated fairly, which is why we’re pushing to make sure they’re treated fairly.”