

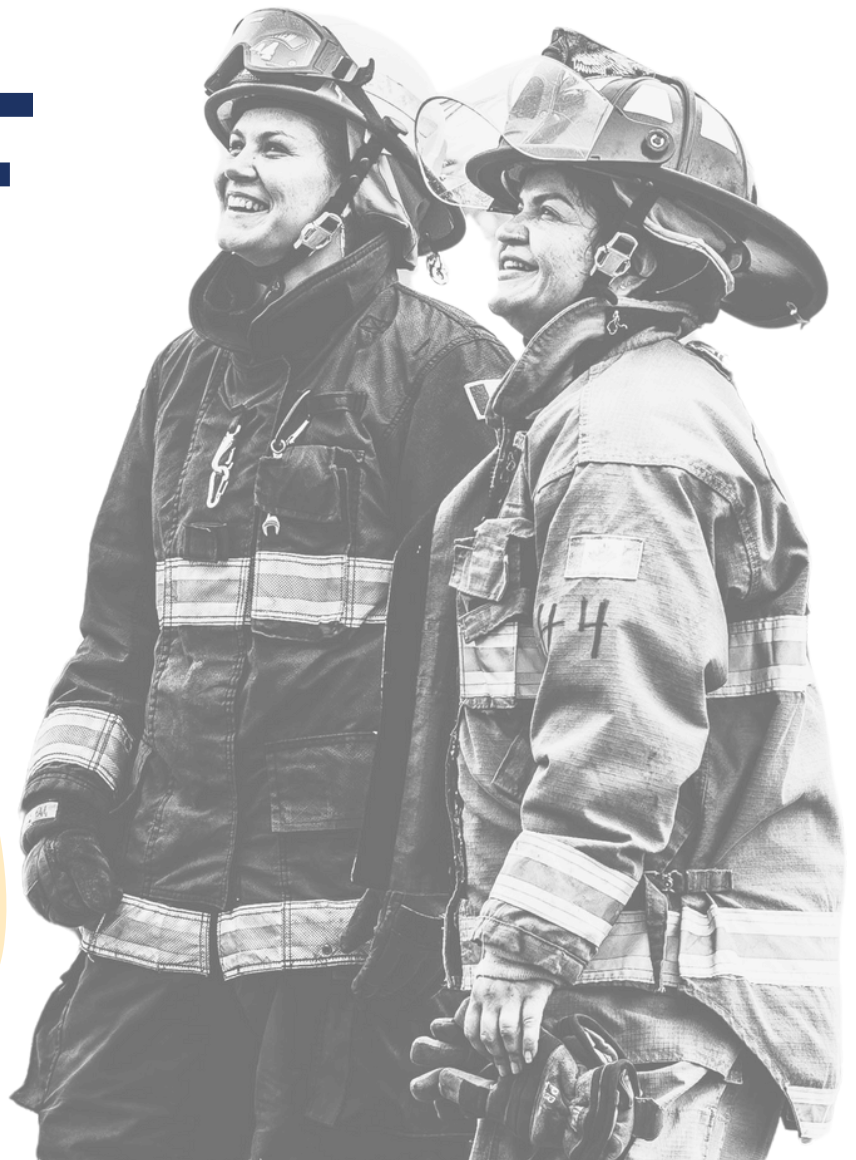


Fire Service Women Ontario

Encourage, Educate, Empower

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



fswow.ca

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

As outgoing President of Fire Service Women Ontario, I want to thank all our members and partners in the fire service who have supported us over the years. As I complete my five years as President, I reflect on what we have accomplished during my tenure. We have experienced unprecedented growth and success in many areas, including increased membership numbers, meaningful relationships with fire service partners, successful training events, and a strong financial foundation with the support of many sponsors. Our governance structure has been reinforced, meeting our fiduciary and legal responsibilities under provincial legislation.

What have we been up to since 2019? My presidential term also marked the start of a global pandemic, and FSWO redirected our annual training event to an online format for two years. Although an initial disappointment, this pivot towards online training strengthened our organization in the long term, boosting FSWO's visibility internationally. We made the best of our pandemic time and developed our internal capacity for strategic planning, membership, governance, fundraising, and sustainability.

We established our Strategy Toolkit for Including Women in the Fire Service, which is available for free at fswocanada.ca. We gathered and shared the stories of women in fire in the Where There is Smoke art project, sharing their heartbreaks and triumphs on the job.

In 2020, FSWO hired our first-ever staff person, a part-time Executive Director, a position filled admirably by Susan Jones, who has been an FSWO advocate from Day 1.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(CONTINUED)

FSWO revised our vision, mission and values, focusing on what is important to us and our members: gender equity. We modernized our website, logo and membership categories in 2022. Our board members served as subject matter experts at first responder conferences on leadership and mental health at the provincial, federal and international levels.

We also connected with young girls through an educational science video about firefighting and at Build a Dream career expos. Our last three training symposiums (2022-2024) grew yearly, with unique course offerings and new partnerships with fire department hosts Belleville Fire, FESTI and Hamilton Fire. Our online engagement reached new heights – a video of our symposium training reached over 100,000 views.

As you will see further, our membership numbers continue to grow yearly as more departments realize the value of supporting a vision of gender equity for their staff and communities. During my tenure, we won national funding from Women and Gender Equity not once but three times – strengthening our organizational capacity to plan for the future.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(CONTINUED)

Perhaps my greatest pride lies in how FSWO has “paid it forward” by supporting the establishment of two sister organizations: BC and Central Provinces. We have long imagined a national network of women in fire, and I know this future is well on its way to being realized.

Fire Service Women Ontario remains dedicated to its mission, vision, and values, working tirelessly towards gender equity and supporting women in the fire service. We are here to serve you and build FSWO according to our values: accountability, collaboration, camaraderie, inclusion, support and trust. Serving on this board of directors has been a great honour. The collegial relationships and friendships I have developed at FSWO have outpaced any other professional network I have been a part of. I thank you, our members, for granting me this opportunity.

I look forward to continuing my involvement as Past President.

Sincerely,

Pike Keppan



2024 FSWO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Pike Krpan

Vice President: Lydia Wilcox

Secretary: Kristy-Lynn Pankhurst

Treasurer: Debbie Higgins

Directors-at-Large:

Jaclyn Halko

Mary Hindle

Kate Jamieson

Helen Klumpp

Teagan Knowles

Sofie Lasiuk

Laura Ellis (Student Director)



Past President: Louise Hine-Schmidt

Executive Director: Susan Jones

Finance Director: Shelley Molica

BOARD MEMBER DEPARTURES

Our board underwent some significant changes this year. We thank all outgoing members, **Debbie Higgins, Tracey Shields, Cheryl Hunt, Mary Hindle,** and **Sofie Lasiuk,** for their extraordinary commitment and passion.

The board of directors is the engine that drives our work, and these members gave much time and energy. Thank you.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

1. Organizational Structure and Governance: Completed a comprehensive bylaw and governance review in accordance with new provincial legislation, reviewed by legal counsel and ratified by the FSWO membership.

2. Financial Sustainability and Sponsorship Growth: Implemented new sponsorship management software and group membership automation, resulting in a tripling of sponsorship support and more department memberships, boosting FSWO's financial resilience and capacity for growth.

3. Support for Sister Organizations: FSWO contributed to successfully launching Fire Service Women of Canada Provinces (FSWCP), expanding the network of organizations dedicated to gender equity and support for women in the fire service.

4. Leadership Development: FSWO collaborated with Fire Service Women British Columbia (FSWBC) and FSWCP to present a workshop at the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC) conference, promoting leadership and professional growth for women in the fire sector.

5. 2024 Symposium Success: FSWO hosted a well-attended symposium in Hamilton, Ontario. The symposium brought together fire service members, industry professionals, and stakeholders to offer innovative training, furthering FSWO's mission to educate, empower, and encourage women in the fire service.

6. Dare to Lead Program Launch: Offering a dynamic year-long women's leadership development and networking program with Katherine Lamb of Effective Command in 2025.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

7. Virtual Education: To meet the diverse needs of our members, many dynamic sessions were offered. Topics included Recruitment and Hiring, Leadership, and Health and Nutrition.

8. Documentary Film: FSWO has partnered with Hamilton LOFT (Ladies of Film and Television) to develop a short documentary film about our work, which will be released in 2025.

9. National Recognition: Congratulations to **FSWO Past President Louise Hine-Schmidt** and **FSWO Executive Director Susan Jones**, who were recognized for their current, sustained, and significant contributions to fire and emergency services at the national level with *King Charles II Coronation Medals*.

FSWO also extends its congratulations to many of our other members and esteemed colleagues who were also awarded *King Charles II Coronation Medals*:

Deputy Fire Chief Kalpana Rajgopalan (Oakville Fire Department)

Fire Chief Paul Boissonneault (Oakville Fire Department)

Dr. Tina Saryeddine, Executive Director (Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs)

Ms. Zoe Boicescu (Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs)

Ms. Anabel Therrien (Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs)

Captain Jenn Dawkins (Fire Service Women British Columbia)

Fire Chief Jeremy Parkin (Rama Fire Rescue Service)

Fire Chief Paul Hutt (Ottawa Fire Service)

Training Officer Linz Swick (Hamilton Fire Department)

Fire Chief Andrea DeJong (St. Catharines Fire Service)

Fire Chief Keri Martens (Banff Fire Department)



ANNUAL AWARDS

President's Trailblazer Award – Deputy Chief Debbie Higgins, Toronto Fire Services, Ret.

3 E Award – Communications Acting Supervisor Kristen Whittall, Oshawa Fire Services

Diversity and Inclusion Award – Chief Jeremy Parkin, Rama Fire Rescue

Pink Helmet of Courage Award – Assistant Platoon Chief Stacey Hemstock, Kitchener Fire Department

FSWO Legacy of Leadership Award – President Pike Krpan, Acting Captain, Hamilton Fire Department

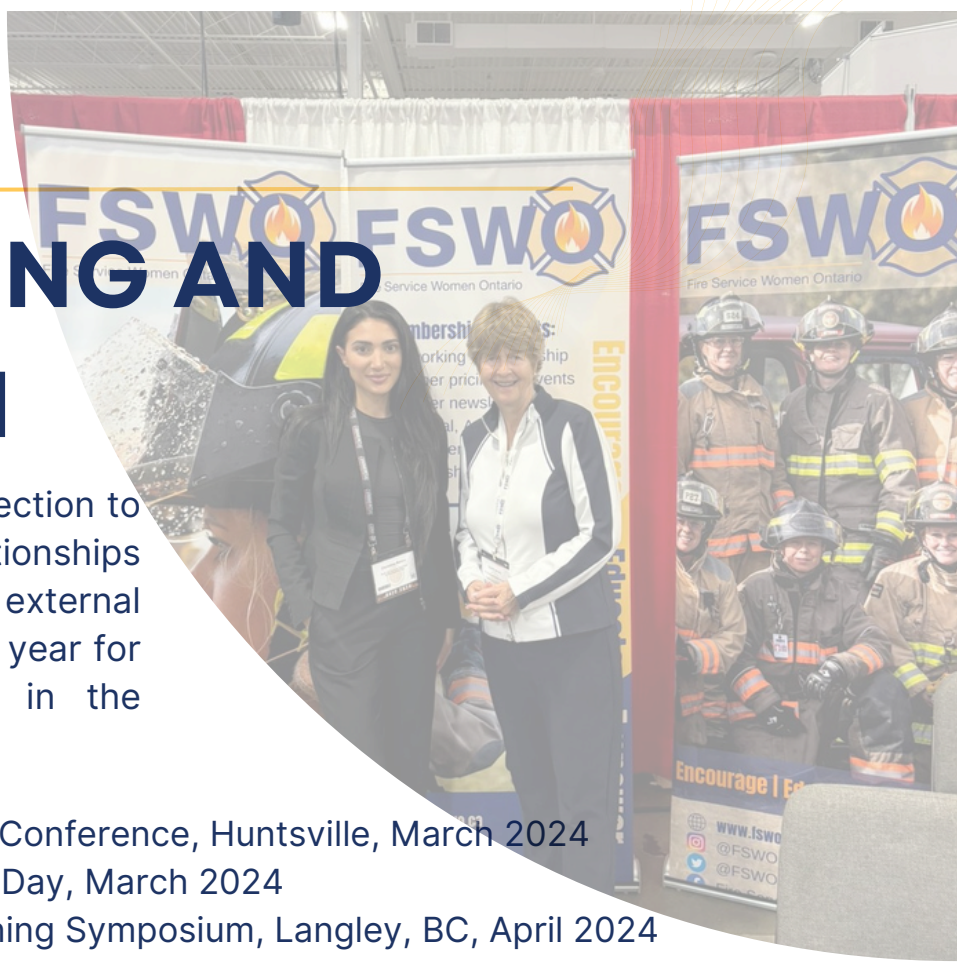
Congratulations to all, and thank you for your commitment to bringing about positive change in the fire service. *For more information about their achievements, please visit fsw.ca.*



NETWORKING AND OUTREACH

As part of FSWO's strategic direction to foster more meaningful relationships with fire service leaders and external stakeholders, 2024 was a busy year for the Board with participation in the following events:

- Northeastern Fire Education Conference, Huntsville, March 2024
- TEMA Foundation Education Day, March 2024
- Fire Service Women BC Training Symposium, Langley, BC, April 2024
- Canadian Hazmat and CBRNE Summit, April 2024
- Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Conference, Building Leaders & Driving Change session, Mississauga, May 2024
- Build a Dream Job Fair, Ottawa, May 2024
- Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario Conference, Blue Mountains, June 2024
- International Association of Fire Chiefs Diversity Executive Leadership Program, FRI International, August 2024
- Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs Conference, Women Chiefs and Company Officer Session, Montreal, September 2024



COMMITTEE REPORTS

The following summarizes the activities of the FSWO committees in the past year. These committees are chaired by board members and include FSWO members.

Governance Committee

Chaired by Executive Director Susan Jones

FSWO undertook a significant review of its Constitution and By-laws in 2024 to ensure compliance with the newly updated Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. To accomplish this, FSWO retained the services of Steve Indig, a lawyer with Sport Law. Steve provided an assessment and recommendations for necessary changes, which were ratified by our membership in January 2025. Of note are new, more manageable timelines for holding general members meetings and annual general meetings; clarity on board member roles and conditions of membership; and more flexibility for the Board of Directors to determine its proposed number of members before each election. FSWO has submitted the appropriate documentation to the province to ensure compliance with the legislated timeline. In conjunction with this process, Steve Indig also provided yearly mandatory board training on FSWO governance matters and risk management, including legal obligations and confidentiality, board member conduct, conflict of interest guidelines, and transparency and accountability.

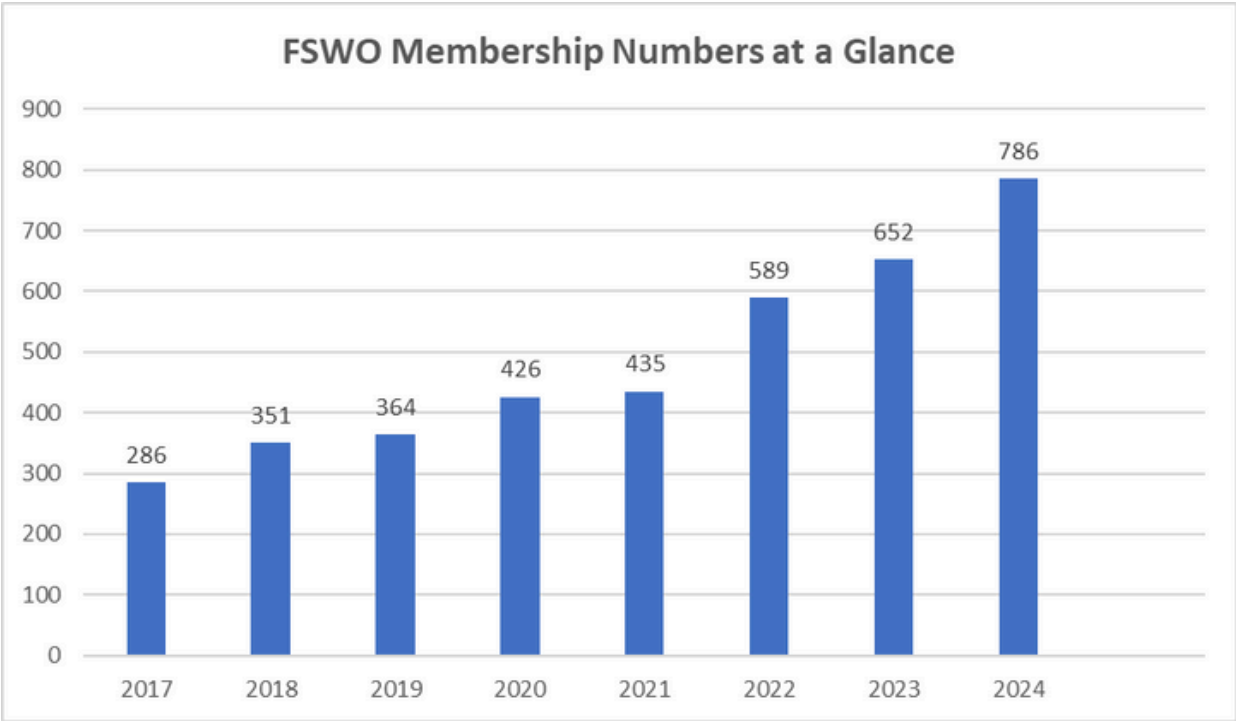


COMMITTEE REPORTS

Membership Committee

Chaired by Director/Registrar Jaclyn Halko

In 2024, FSWO undertook a membership drive, which resulted in many fire departments joining us for the first time. With the increasing sophistication of our membership database and renewal process, FSWO can now support departments or associations in creating online group memberships at bronze, silver, or gold levels. In addition to many individual memberships, FSWO includes 37 departmental memberships, three association memberships, and four pre-service program memberships this year.



COMMITTEE REPORTS

Symposium Committee

Chaired by President Pike Krpan

The 2024 FSWO Annual Training Symposium, "Building Leaders, Driving Change," was held at the Hamilton Fire Department from November 7 to 9, 2024. The event featured over 50 sessions, including 21 hands-on training sessions, 30 classroom sessions, a keynote session with Michelle Douglas, executive director of the LGBT Purge Fund, and a leadership panel discussion with many of Canada's highest-ranking women chiefs.

Addressing one of FSWO's strategic directions, the symposium provided trusted, reliable support for all women, with a diverse range of sessions covering all areas of the fire service. The event brought together representatives from over 80 organizations from Ontario, Canada, and the United States, with 165 attendees representing urban and rural fire services, associations, FSWBC, FSWCP, fire colleges, and the Canadian Armed Forces. Two student scholarships were awarded this year, generously funded by a sponsor who intends to expand this initiative in 2025.

The visionary group Hamilton Ladies of Film and Television (LOFT) was a notable presence at this year's event. LOFT is gathering footage for a documentary on women in fire, which will be released in 2025. See the Communications Committee update below.

The Symposium Committee reports a gross income of \$93,180.76, exceeding projections in registration, silent auction, and sponsorship. The symposium committee continued to find ways to economize on event costs to bring this valuable training opportunity to as many in the fire service as possible.

Much credit for the symposium's success goes to our Hamilton Fire partners, Chief David Cunliffe, Chief Training Officer Chris Wiemelink, Training Officer Linz Swick and all the staff at Hamilton Fire Training, whose vision and expertise ensured the event's success.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Symposium Committee (*continued*)

Chaired by President Pike Krpan

We thank them for their leadership and generosity in providing one of Canada's best fire education training facilities. Recognition also goes to FSWO Finance Director Shelley Molica, OAFC staff Katelyn Widdop and Laura Alvaliotis, and Kathryn Hendrick, FSWO's media relations consultant.

This year, the FSWO has adopted an event code of conduct to offer a safe learning and networking environment. The Code outlines the expectations for all participants and ensures the highest standards of professionalism and mutual respect are upheld. Upon registration, this policy will be distributed to all participants and upheld at all in-person and virtual events.

Save the date for our next FSWO Annual Training Symposium: October 23-25, 2025, at Oakville Fire Training Centre for Emergency Excellence.

Communications Committee

Chaired by Director Kristy-Lynn Pankhurst

The Communications Committee oversees all social media profiles, and newsletters for FSWO publications. Additionally, this year, FSWO began a partnership with Hamilton LOFT (Ladies of Film & Television), a dynamic collective dedicated to empowering women-identifying and non-binary artists in the film industry by creating impactful, female-driven content and tackling challenges within the industry.

LOFT captured content at the FSWO 2024 Annual Training Symposium and Hamilton's Camp FFIT to produce a creative short film and promotional video segments highlighting the experiences and contributions of women firefighters. This project aims to reduce stigma, provide visual representation, and inspire a shift in perception of women in fire services through genuine interviews and event footage while encouraging more women to consider firefighting as a viable and rewarding career.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Communications Committee (continued)

The project is funded by Hamilton Community Foundation: Women 4 Change Fund and Hamilton Fire Department (City of Hamilton). LOFT is working on producing a documentary-style short film to be premiered at the 2025 Hamilton Film Festival and as part of the 2025 FSWO Symposium, as well as edited clips and photo still for FSWO social media use.

FSWO thanks the Hamilton LOFT Crew: Laura Ellis, Teresa D'Elia, Alysha Main, Laura Wilson, Lucy Sanci, Katie Rawn, Heidi Jiang, Gwen Rogers, Leah Klein, Claudia Echeverry Henao, Olivia Ellis, Larissa Vieira, as well as Fire Chief David Cunliffe, Hamilton Community Foundation and the Women 4 Change Fund, Nathan Fleet and the Hamilton Film Festival, Westdale Theatre, YWCA, Factory Media Centre, Captain Dan O'Grady (Mattawa Fire) and all those who agreed to be a part of the project and the FSWO!

Recognizing our logo branding's value, the FSWO Board has initiated legal proceedings to secure trademark rights protecting the brand, logo, mission, vision, and values. This is a multi-year process that was started in 2023. The benefits of acquiring a trademark include establishing permanent ownership, securing exclusive rights, acting as a deterrent against confusingly similar trademarks, preventing infringement, and mitigating the risk of counterfeit goods. Additionally, a trademark enhances eligibility for specific advantages in the digital marketplace, ensuring the integrity of the Fire Service Women Ontario brand.

2025 FSWO Social Media Following

Newsletter subscribers: 2176

Facebook: 2.5K followers (+100 from 2024)

Twitter: 4291 followers (-143 from 2024)

Instagram: 2437 followers (+224 followers from 2024)

LinkedIn: 320 connections (+31 from 2024)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Financial Sustainability Committee

Chaired by President Pike Krpan and Treasurer Debbie Higgins

Responding to our strategic directive to ensure FSWO's long-term financial sustainability, this committee is focused on securing operating and program grants and deepening our sponsor development and engagement.

Although FSWO did not secure any significant grants in 2024, it was a banner year for symposium sponsorship fundraising. Led by Director Helen Klumpp and Executive Director Susan Jones, FSWO generated several thousand dollars, which helped offset registration costs and provide student scholarships for 2024 symposium attendees. Our move to an online donor management system and template use proved successful in tracking and thanking our sponsors.

The Committee also supported partner organizations in developing funding proposals, contributing to our collective goal of encouraging, empowering and educating women in the fire service. We have begun collaborating with our sister organizations to leverage our collective capacity and funds to offer more training and development opportunities, networking and support for women across our provincial areas in 2025.



COMMITTEE REPORTS

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee

Chaired by President Pike Krpan

FSWO developed and approved an Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Guideline which represents a robust framework for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for women in the fire service. FSWO's dedication to these principles is intended to serve as a model for other organizations to strive for diversity, equity and accessibility. FSWO's continued evaluation and refinement of the IDEA guidelines will ensure that it meets the evolving needs of all women in the fire service, paving the way for a more inclusive future.

Nomination and Election Committee

Chaired by President Pike Krpan

This committee, created in November 2024, established guidelines for hosting the FSWO virtual election on March 19, 2025. We continue to use the secure platform Election Runner to ensure a fair and accessible election process.



COMMITTEE REPORTS

FSWO Virtual Education Committee

Co-chaired by FSWO Director Jaclyn Halko and Vice-President Lydia Wilcox

The FSWO Virtual Education Committee held 3 workshops in 2024:

1. Changing Careers – Led by Jaclyn Halko, this session provided valuable insights and strategies for those considering a new career in the fire service.
2. When I Doubt Myself – Facilitated by jona olsson, this workshop focused on building self-confidence and resilience.
3. Recruitment—Presented by Mike Wood, this session discussed effective recruitment strategies and best practices for attracting and retaining talent.

All workshops were well attended and reviewed, underscoring their relevance for the fire service. FSWO continues to survey our members to tailor our future programming offers to meet their needs. The committee will develop additional virtual programs to further professional development and community engagement among FSWO members.





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