

News Release

For Immediate Release

October 3, 2017

Ottawa, ON- Today in the House of Commons, Mel Arnold, Member of Parliament for North Okanagan-Shuswap, introduced a Private Members' Bill that seeks to amend the *Criminal Code of Canada* in relation to offences involving firefighting equipment.

The bill, C-365, proposes a new specific offence for theft of firefighting equipment that causes danger to life. Arnold's bill also proposes to establish mischief related to firefighting equipment as an aggravating circumstance while the third component of the bill proposes a sentencing objective for theft of firefighting equipment.

"This past summer, I was shocked by reports of firefighting equipment being vandalized and stolen from wildfire service camps," said MP Arnold. "After researching the Criminal Code, it was apparent that the Code has a gap when it comes to denunciation and deterrence specific to these types of offences and so I have introduced this bill in recognition of firefighters and the safety that they provide our communities."

Currently, vandalism or tampering related to firefighting equipment can be prosecuted under the Criminal Code's existing mischief prohibitions. The bill's proposed offence for theft of firefighting equipment causing danger to life would deliver the same maximum penalty, imprisonment for life (25 years), that the Criminal Code currently contains for mischief causing actual danger to life.

The aggravating circumstance for mischief and the sentencing objective for theft related to firefighting equipment would be available for judges to consider, at their discretion, when deciding a sentence. The aggravating circumstance and sentencing objective would provide a sentencing judge the basis to deliver a heavier sentence than would otherwise be applied for simple mischief or theft.

"Whether the offence occurs at a fire hall, in an apartment building or at a wildfire site, tampering or theft of firefighting equipment can quickly cause danger to life and it is time the Criminal Code reflects the gravity of such offences," concluded MP Arnold. "I look forward to working with colleagues from all parties to move bill C-365 forward in support of firefighters and the work they do to keep Canadians safe 365 days a year."

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