



Sasamat Volunteer Fire Department March News



The SVFD's New Roster

78% of firefighters in Canada are volunteers. These are men and women who train together to protect the communities where they live. That kind of engagement can be fragile. Drive through rural Canada and you will see many small municipalities struggling to maintain a viable fire service due to declining rates of volunteerism.

Anmore and Belcarra have bucked this trend. With 45 resident firefighters, our roster has grown to the point now where we've literally run out of lockers for our crews. As we experienced last summer with three large fire-events, it is this *exceptional* level of local involvement which drives the SVFD's success.

The Bottom Line

For communities of less than 4000 people, the SVFD likely now has the *largest* contingent of firefighters in the province. This roster is trained and maintained for less than \$50,000 a year.

Our SCBA Upgrade Fundraiser

Working alongside our two municipal councils, the SVFD budgets its operational and truck replacement needs well in advance. However, as we've begun training to new provincial standards, we've discovered a pressing need for upgrade. Our old breathing apparatuses do not provide us with enough air capacity or safety features to permit us to meet the response standard we wish to. To meet it, we need 20 new SCBA replacements.

Rather than pass along this \$170,000 cost onto tax rolls, we've decided to initiate a fundraiser where some of the businesses, realtors, and developers involved in the communities might generously step forward and support us. Each year, the demands on our volunteers increase in lockstep with development. It can't be a one-way street. We'd love to see others accept Canadian Tire owner, Paul Droulis' challenge to support our members.

Leading our effort with this community fundraise is **Neil Belenkie** (our member profile for this month).

Always willing to lend a hand and bring people together on our department, Neil is our go-to organizer. With an extensive background in business and television, Neil knows how to champion the cause and the people who get involved. With *three* SCBAs secured by donation already and some regional media coverage, we'll be keeping the two communities updated as to our success with donations month by month.

Thank you very much to all of you who have already stepped forward to support us.

Sincerely,

Jay Sharpe (*Fire Chief*)

Dave Gregory (*Dist. Chief Anmore*)

Jol Drake (*Dist. Chief Belcarra*)



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Sasamat Volunteer Fire Department Member Profile



Name: Neil Belenkie

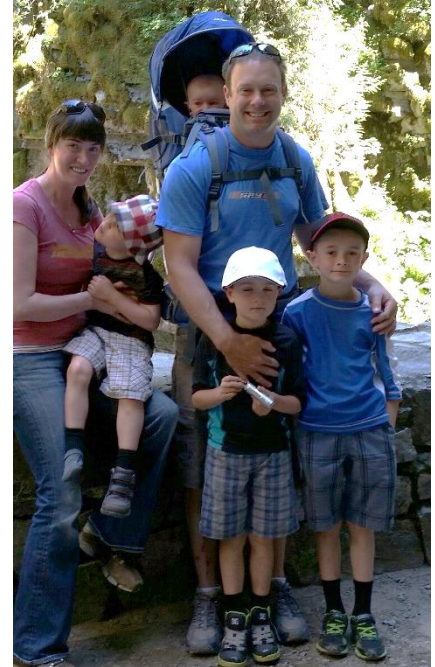
Home Municipality: Belcarra

Work Background: Business owner

Years as SVFD Member: 7

Why I joined the SVFD:

To learn first aid skills to help keep my family safe. To set an example for our children about why it is important to give back and help others. To help members of our community and become more involved with our villages.



What the SVFD means to me:

The SVFD is an opportunity for our family to invest in our community, neighbors and friends. My wife and kids know that when the pager goes off, I'm not leaving them for something trivial; I'm rushing to join my SVFD team to help someone in serious need. The SVFD is our family's way to give back.

A memorable moment as a volunteer:

During a forest fire a few years back, a number of us crouched down in the brush while a helicopter approached to drop a bucket of water nearby. I remember looking over at one of our team and he looked back at me with a huge smile on his face; there wasn't anywhere in the world where we would rather have been than right there. In the end, with the help of the BC Wildland forest fire fighters, we were able to stop the fire from spreading to our villages and doing irreparable harm to the houses and residents of Belcarra and Anmore. I felt that I had accomplished more that day than I have ever done sitting at my desk.