



Date Tuesday, February 16, 2021

From: Jeff Gautreau, Acting Fire Chief

Subject Closing of the Ontario Fire College

Memo Report

Analysis

The Province of Ontario, via the Solicitor General's Office, announced closure of the Ontario Fire College on January 13, 2021. To view the media release, please select the following link:

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59945/ontario-expanding-firefighter-training-across-the-province>

The Ontario Fire College, located in Gravenhurst, first opened as a training resource for firefighters throughout the province in 1949, employing 30 full-time staff members, and housing up to 100 firefighters at a time. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the College has been closed for on-site training since March 2020. Per the announcement of the Province, the College is not anticipated to re-open prior to its decommissioning.

In place of the college, the Province proposes to move toward a regional training centre model, which will include approximately 20 centres, combining both in-person and online training opportunities. As included in the release, training at the regional training centres will be accommodated by the Office of the Fire Marshall. The intention, as stated, is to 'increase capacity for training and reduce the need for municipal fire departments to pay for travel and costs related to overtime and shift backfills'.

As stated in the release, the shift to a regionalized model is intended to provide more training opportunities for firefighters throughout the Province, by increasing access to on-site and online courses in communities where firefighters serve.

Additionally, the Province plans to invest in two mobile units that will bring live fire training to local fire services. Specialized equipment will also be made available to regional training centres so training can be specifically tailored to local needs.

Costs associated with the regionalized training model have not yet been announced. While costs are not yet confirmed, the closure may have an impact on the Inter Township Fire Department annual training budget. Staff are unable to clarify the amount of said impact at this time.

The Inter Township Fire Department has utilized the Ontario Fire College having members take advantage of the training that was offered. The Fire College Instructors are very professional and knowledgeable. Any firefighter that has attended the College has gained lifetime friendships, networking and vast knowledge of fire service.

Since the announcement, multiple municipalities have expressed their opposition to the closure via a motion of Council. Should Council choose to do the same, a motion, in support of that of the Town of Augusta, has been included for consideration.

Financial Impact

The cost to send one firefighter to existing regional training centres currently range between \$300 - \$1200 per course. This cost does not include accommodations or meals. While the costs of the Provincial model have not yet been confirmed, it is anticipated that said model would likely have a similar cost structure.

Fire college courses in Gravenhurst cost \$65, including accommodations and meals.

It is unknown if the Fire Departments will be subsidized to assist with the financial impact.

Respectfully Submitted: Jeff Gautreau, Fire Chief