



*The Corporation of the Municipality of Wawa
Staff Report*

*Assistant Director – Protective Services
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Prepared For: Corporate Planning	Report No.: KS 2022-01
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Subject

Office of the Fire Marshal has filed O. Reg. 343/22: Firefighter Certification under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.

Summary of the Recommendation

Fire Department to wait for more information on the implementation of the Firefighter Certification.

Summary of the Issues

In the event the Regulation is passed, firefighters performing fire protection service for the Municipality are to become certified to the standard set out in Ontario Regulation 343/22.

List of Stakeholders

Wawa Volunteer Fire Department
Council of Municipality of Wawa
Citizens of Municipality of Wawa

Purpose of Report

The Regulation is specific on the minimum certification standard that firefighters are to meet. There are going to be challenges associated with obtaining certification by current and future firefighters of the Wawa Volunteer Fire Department.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Prepared By:

**Kevin Sabourin
Assistant Director Protective Services**

Analysis

Let me start by saying that the concept of having all firefighters certified to a standard is admirable. The implementation of the mandate then begs the question “How will the plan be executed?”. There is a desire to have a certified standard for all firefighters, the issue is not having a standard to guide training plans or how to execute the plan.

The challenges that arise are with the execution of the mandate and availability to provide instructors for training, electronic testing and availability of evaluators or proctors to test firefighters.

The certified standard will affect the ability to recruit new firefighters to the fire department. Potential new firefighter recruits will have to commit to 80 hours academic training, 80 hours skill training and 8 hours of testing to become a certified firefighter. This information will most likely deter individuals to become a volunteer firefighter.

Volunteer firefighters commit to training and responding to emergency situations while sacrificing time from family, friends and special personal events (birthdays, anniversaries and holidays). This mandate will be asking firefighters to commit to more time to attend practical courses, away from home and doing online academic training. You are asking firefighters to give up their vacation time or possibly having to request leave from work without pay.

Our volunteer firefighters are individuals who are willing to learn how to fight a fire, how to extricate a person trapped in a wreck and are willing to help their own community in mitigating an emergency situation. They do this not to earn a living but as a way of giving back to their community. Most of our volunteer firefighters enjoy learning and are dedicated to the practical training to acquire skills and knowledge required to perform their duties but are reluctant to participate in the classroom on the academic portion of training. The most significant factor limiting participation in academic training is the fear of failure. This fear is real to most firefighters whether it is exposing a learning disability, only having basic academic skills or failure in front of friends and peers. Firefighting is a stressful profession and now adding the additional stress to be academically and skill tested will manifest into a loss of firefighters.

Financial/Staffing Implications

The expense to provide the training necessary for the certification of firefighters could be alarming. Costs that could be incurred by the Municipality are travel to courses by firefighters, registration of courses at Regional Training Centres, bringing qualified OFM instructors in to teach courses, provide training to qualify in-house instructors and compensate or reimburse firefighters to attend courses.

Policies Affecting Proposal

There are no policies affecting proposal.

Alternatives

Schedule OFM instructors to instruct firefighters to the minimum certification standard.
(Not Recommended)

Do not schedule courses or training for firefighters.
(Not Recommended)

Have couple of firefighters become qualified instructors (currently on going) to provide training to the fire department.
(Recommended)

Conclusion

With the filing of the Firefighter Certification regulation, there are more unanswered questions pertaining to the implementation of the concept. It is too soon to tell the implications to Municipalities and what is involved around this Regulation.

Recommendation

Continue with having a couple of current firefighters to train to become instructors. Wait until the Ontario Fire Marshal provides documentation and direction on process to become certified.

Attachments

None

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Office of the Fire Marshal**

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MEMORANDUM TO: Heads of Council / Chief Administrative Officers

FROM: Tim Beckett
Acting Ontario Fire Marshal

DATE: April 14, 2022

SUBJECT: O. Reg. 343/22: Firefighter Certification

Dear Heads of Council and Chief Administrative Officers,

I am writing to provide an update on the work that we have been doing on firefighter certification under the [Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997](#).

I am pleased to let you know that O. Reg. 343/22: Firefighter Certification has been filed under the Act. It is available on e-Laws [here](#).

Throughout the consultation period, we received tremendous feedback and support from municipalities, fire chiefs, and partner associations including the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario. The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) has been working collaboratively with all partners to understand the regulation and how the OFM can best support departments at the local level throughout the implementation period.

The final regulation reflects changes related to exceptions, transition, and certification standards in response to feedback received during the Regulatory Registry posting period and during the municipal technical briefings. This feedback assisted in finalizing the firefighter certification regulation, which provides flexibility for local municipalities, while supporting firefighter and public safety.

With this regulation, we are not asking that firefighters train to higher levels than they already are. Certification is a process of verification, ensuring that a firefighter is trained to the standard they are required to perform, as set out in the level of service determined by a municipal council or territory without municipal organization.

Mandatory certification in Ontario will validate the training that firefighters receive and, in turn, will create safer communities.

Many of the comments received with respect to implementation have also been or will be addressed in the coming months. For instance, to address capacity pressures within the OFM, we are already increasing the staff complement for both the Ontario Fire College (OFC) and our Academic Standards and Evaluation Unit. This will ensure that we can respond to the current and ongoing demand for training and certification across Ontario.

We also continue to refine and enhance both our Adjunct Instructor and Regional Training Centre models to meet provincial demand. Learning Contract accessibility has been expanded allowing fire departments that already train together to continue to do so in order to achieve certification. The OFC will also be working with fire departments to increase their own internal training capacity and will be exploring opportunities to provide additional training for senior officers through upcoming seminars, conferences and webinars.

At the same time, we heard from many departments that purchasing textbooks and other training essentials is challenging. We have therefore explored options with the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council (FMPFSC) to look at supports that they can provide on the procurement of textbooks and other materials. The FMPFSC is supportive of the certification file and will be finalizing options that will be communicated to fire departments shortly.

I am pleased that we have been able to work so collaboratively with municipalities, fire departments, and other partners to have this regulation finalized. With a long implementation window, we are confident that certification is achievable and look forward to working with firefighters across Ontario as this regulation is operationalized.

Sincerely,

Tim Beckett
Acting Fire Marshal

c: Mario Di Tommaso, O.O.M.
Deputy Solicitor General, Community Safety