

New Training Regulations for Fire Services

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Report Summary

This report and presentation provides information regarding the proposed regulation under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 (FPPA) that would establish mandatory minimum certification standards for specific fire protection services.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)

This report refers to operational matters and has no direct connection to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

This report presents information related to the proposed 2022 Firefighter Certification Regulation to be made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. This proposed regulation was introduced on January 28, 2022 as a consultation draft by the Ontario Government, Ministry of the Solicitor General, and seeks to establish mandatory minimum certification standards for specific fire protection services.

Once the approved certification is passed by the Ontario Government, the proposed regulation will come into force on July 1, 2022, with a four-year and six-year compliance timeline based upon the level of fire protection service set out within the regulation and in alignment with the municipal Establishing and Regulating Bylaw. Under the proposed certification, Firefighters, Officers, Apparatus Drivers/Pumper Operators, Fire Inspectors, Fire Educators, Safety Officers, and Technical Rescue Responders will have to be certified.

Prior to this proposed certification, there has been no provincial requirement for firefighters to be certified in any discipline related to the level of fire protection services they provide. In the absence of regulations, Greater Sudbury Fire Services maintains a best effort training model in an attempt to achieve National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

Proposed Certification Regulations

The Ministry of the Solicitor General is proposing a firefighter certification model that outlines the mandatory minimum standard and corresponding job performance requirements (JPR's) for of firefighters delivering specific fire protection services. The proposed approach would provide flexibility to meet local training needs based on the level of fire protection service set by municipal council, through the Establishing and Regulating Bylaw, while promoting firefighter and public safety.

The Ontario Government first proposed Firefighter Certification in May of 2018, but repealed this model in October of 2018. The 2022 proposed regulation is similar to the repealed version except for expanded compliance timelines.

The 2022 proposed certification approach would:

- Require municipalities to meet the minimum certification standard that aligns with their level of fire protection service based upon their Establishing and Regulating Bylaw.
- Include minimum certification requirements for identified fire protection services, based on specific job performance requirements (JPR's) taken from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) professional qualification standards.
- Require certification to full NFPA standards (rather than only specific job performance requirements) for certain fire protection services.
- Prevent the need for recertification of firefighters, if the requirements for obtaining a certification standard are subsequently updated or changed.
- Provide a time-limited legacy opportunity for fire departments to apply for a letter of compliance based on previously completed training, skills, and knowledge. This process would only be available for a limited number of identified fire protection services prescribed in the regulation and to firefighters who have been providing those services for a predetermined amount of time, having the appropriate training records to support the request.

Citing five distinct coroner's inquests into firefighter deaths in the Province of Ontario since 1989 where training, and the lack thereof, were key findings, the Ontario Fire Marshal has identified that the proposed 2022 regulations are meant to ensure all Ontario firefighters are properly trained to the level of service they provide.

Analysis

The proposed certification regulation has been examined by key stakeholders, who in principle, support the need for provincial firefighter certification but have provided their constructive feedback to the Ontario Government for its consideration. These stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs
- Firefighters Association of Ontario
- Association of Municipalities Ontario
- Christian Labour Association of Canada
- Ontario Professional Firefighters Association

Municipal feedback to the proposed certification was done in accordance with the Ontario Government public consultation process and in conjunction with various member surveys from the association stakeholders. The consultation period concluded on February 28, 2022 with Greater Sudbury Fire Services providing feedback on items such as:

- Lack of funding to support certification
- Timeframe for achieving certification
- Potential impacts to recruitment and retention of firefighters

The Greater Sudbury Fire Service maintains 4 full-time, 1 composite, and 18 volunteer fire stations across

the municipality. The volunteer stations are staffed with approximately 250 paid on-call firefighters and the full-time stations are staffed with 112 scheduled firefighters, four training officers, six fire inspectors, and two fire educators. Apart from 2020 where the COVID-19 pandemic impacted operations, Fire Services annually recruits individuals for the position of Volunteer firefighter and those who are successful in the recruitment have been historically provided an initial training of 40 hours. Full-time recruitment is done on an as needed basis and has occurred three of the last five years with successful individuals completing an initial training of 400 hours.

Volunteer firefighters are expected to be available on an on-call basis to respond to emergency incidents and are notified to attend at their respective station when their services are required. They are also expected to attend other non-emergency duties such as weekly training, equipment maintenance, and station duties. In Greater Sudbury paid on-call firefighters are compensated for all emergency responses, mandatory training, equipment maintenance, and station duties. Volunteer firefighters are represented by the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) Local 920 and currently have a negotiated collective agreement minimum attendance rate of 25% of all emergency incidents and 12 two-hour training sessions annually (24 hours training each year).

Full-time or career firefighters are scheduled on a four platoon, 24-hour system and work a minimum 168 hours per month. They perform the non-emergency duties of training, equipment maintenance, and station duties while on their scheduled shift. Fire inspection and education roles are staffed on a scheduled Monday to Friday system working 42 hours per week. In Greater Sudbury full-time firefighters, trainers, inspectors, and educators are represented by the Sudbury Professional Firefighters Association, IAFF Local 527 and maintain an average of 400 hours of on duty training each year.

The proposed certification is based on fire protection services provided in the municipality. Greater Sudbury Fire Services performs the following protection services under the current Establishing and Regulating Bylaw, 2020-58:

- Fire Prevention
- Fire Education
- Fire Suppression Interior Attack
- Auto Extrication
- Medical Tiered Response
- Still / Swift / Ice Water Rescue
- High / Low Angle Rope Rescue
- Hazardous Materials Rescue
- Wildland Firefighting

Following the proposed certification model, Greater Sudbury Fire Services is defined as a full-service department, which is one that provides a measure of full-time and volunteer firefighter services to the municipality.

Under this designation it is expected that, to achieve certification in accordance with the Establishing and Regulating Bylaw, Greater Sudbury Fire Services must achieve:

- NFPA 1001 – Standard for Firefighter
- NFPA 1002 – Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator
- NFPA 1021 – Standard for Fire Officer
- NFPA 1031 – Standard for Fire Inspector and Plans Examiner
- NFPA 1035 – Standard for Fire Life Safety Educator
- NFPA 1041 – Standard for Fire Services Instructor
- NFPA 1072 – Standard for Hazardous Material Response
- NFPA 1006 – Standard for Technical Rescue Personnel
 - Rope Rescue

- Water Rescue

Conclusion

Greater Sudbury Fire Services is currently undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of all firefighters, training staff, and fire prevention staff who are subject to the proposed certification. The information gathered will form a follow-up report to Committee where the expected training requirements to achieve certification will be presented, specific to the members of Greater Sudbury Fire Services.

In addition, the changes to the training requirements will have a financial impact as the increase in initial and ongoing annual training hours are expected to exceed current budgeted allocations. Furthermore, there are expected to be additional unbudgeted requirements for training materials, props, supplies, and personnel to support the proposed requirements to achieve certification.

Training resource requirements and related costs are currently being evaluated for inclusion into the follow-up report and are expected to form a portion of Fire Services budgetary requests for 2023.

As the proposed certification is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2022, once the approved certification is passed by the Ontario Government and the analysis of requirements related to Greater Sudbury Fire Services is complete, the follow-up report will be presented to Committee.