

## **Update on Mandatory Firefighter NFPA Certification and 2024 Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment – June 2024**

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### **Report Summary**

This report provides information regarding the status of volunteer recruitment, retention activities and the City's progress in meeting firefighter certification requirements found within O. Reg 343/22 Fire Fighter Certification.

### **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**

#### **Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention**

Fire Services undertakes volunteer recruitment annually and has accepted volunteer firefighter (VFF) recruitment applications year-round for several years. Since the closure of the 2023/2024 VFF recruitment intake on April 15, 2024, 131 applications were received and vetted to ensure they met the minimum position requirements, with the following results:

- 48 applicants did not reside in a volunteer district.
- 21 applicants either withdrew or did not respond to our phone calls.
- 56 applicants were scheduled for physical testing.

The physical fitness test was revised in 2024 to align with certification testing. Ten of our volunteer firefighters trialed the revised physical test. All candidates were e-mailed the revised physical testing requirements as part of the recruitment information guide. This information assists new recruits in preparing for the physical testing component of the recruitment process. Physical testing was divided into two groups over two days, with a third date scheduled as a makeup date. There were 25 active volunteer firefighters and officers who participated and assisted with the physical testing process which included providing information,

guidance, and encouragement to each of the candidates.

To ensure the health and safety of each participant, blood pressure (150/100) and heart rate (100bpm) in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) requirements, were taken by paramedics prior to and following the physical testing. During testing, two individuals failed their blood pressure and were asked to follow up with a physician and invited back on the makeup date at which point they both passed. One other candidate failed their blood pressure and was referred to a physician and was unable to complete the physical testing.

A total of 47 candidates successfully advanced to the interview stage of the recruitment process. The interview panel consisted of a Deputy Fire Chief, Business Services Coordinator, and a Volunteer Captain. Interviews were conducted in person with a virtual option over a three-week period. A few Volunteer Captains are now trained in interviews and able to actively participate in the process.

### **Volunteer Recruitment Committee**

The Volunteer Recruitment Committee aims to develop strategies to attract new volunteer recruits. Since 2021, the Committee has met several times to discuss different recruitment strategies. One initiative implemented this year was open houses at the fire halls to promote volunteer recruitment and provide information and guidance to potential applicants. Fire administration has also committed to creating a new video for the website using video and drone footage from the physical fitness testing trials. The Committee will meet again after the 2024 recruitment has concluded to review outcomes and discuss new initiatives for the 2025 recruitment.

### **Volunteer Recruitment Process Update**

After the 2023 recruitment, we reviewed our volunteer firefighter recruitment process to make it simpler, improve communication, and make it easier to apply.

We looked at past issues and sent surveys to 99 recent applicants. Their feedback highlighted gaps in communication, documentation, and job requirements. The following lists the improvements made and are currently working on:

- **Recruitment Open Houses**  
Four open houses were held in Garson, Val Therese, Chelmsford, and Waters.
- **City Website**  
The Volunteer Recruitment page now has clear information on the process and expectations. Updates to the Fire Stations page are planned.
- **Information Guide**  
The updated guide outlines the recruitment process, requirements, and expectations.
- **myJOBS**  
Applicants can now apply online through a new job portal.
- **Mapping Tool**  
A tool was created to help applicants find their nearest fire station and check eligibility.
- **Improved Communication**  
We now contact applicants by mail, email, and phone to keep them informed about important dates and requirements.
- **Onboarding Improvements**  
The process for new volunteer firefighters has been streamlined.
- **Catchment Area**  
We are reviewing the boundaries of the volunteer area.

For additional information on previous volunteer recruitment initiatives and information, please refer to the

report titled “[Greater Sudbury Fire Services – 2022 Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Update](#)” as presented at the Emergency Services Committee on August 10, 2022.

## Mandatory Certification Training

On July 1, 2022, the Government of Ontario enacted O. Reg. 343/22 Firefighter Certification, which outlines the mandatory minimum standards and job performance requirements for all firefighters. For additional information on O. Reg. 343/22 certification and training requirements, please refer to the report titled “[Update on Mandatory Firefighter NFPA Certification and 2023 Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment](#)”, as presented at the City Council Meeting on December 05, 2023.

Fire Services has scheduled a total of five certification courses in 2024:

- **NFPA 1001-FF1**  
The first course was provided to the 2023 volunteer recruits and is scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2024.  
The 2023 recruits are scheduled to take part in the provincial certification examination in July 2024.  
The second course is scheduled for the 2024 volunteer recruits and will commence on Aug 25, 2024, and is scheduled to be completed by October 27, 2024
- **NFPA 1001-FF2**  
Three courses are scheduled in 2024 for existing VFFs.  
Two courses began in January 2024 and are scheduled to be completed by June 02, 2024.  
The third course shall commence on August 24, 2024, and be completed by October 20, 2024.

Appendix A identifies all volunteer certification training scheduled in 2024, including a calendar view. Note the calendar view also identifies the career firefighter recruitment dates and months of the year that the training tower is closed.

The chart below reflects our current focus for volunteer firefighters to meet the regulatory requirements for fire suppression training by the deadline of July 1, 2026.

## Certification Overview for Volunteer Firefighters

NFPA Standard	Volunteer Firefighter	
	Certified / Attending Certification Training	Require Certification
1001 – Firefighter Level 1	164	40
1001 – Firefighter Level 2	137	67
1002 – Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator	0	204

It has been determined that there are currently 40 VFFs who are neither certified nor signed up to participate in certification training, including 11 on a leave of absence. Of the remaining 29 VFFs, there are only 22 that do not have a planned pathway forward to achieve certification. The Service has contacted each of those 22 individuals to determine their individual path to achieve certification. In addition, we have requested a permanent employment schedule to identify opportunities for additional weekday (daytime) certification training dates. Those VFFs on a leave of absence will need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis to achieve certification upon their return to work.

## Certification Opportunities

Since the mandatory certification was implemented in 2022, Greater Sudbury Fire Services (GSFS) will have conducted seven NFPA 1001-FF1 certification programs (4 existing VFFs and 3 VFFs recruitments) and three NFPA 1001-FF2 certification training programs (2 current & 1 in the third quarter) by the end of 2024.

The following are some of the opportunities Fire administration has implemented to provide flexibility in achieving certification:

- Any VFF that could not write the certification provincial exam due to missing 1-3 days of certification training has been contacted and invited to obtain those missing days during the 2024 volunteer recruitment certification training.
- Third-party training opportunities through regional training centers (RTCs), which are endorsed by the Office of the Fire Marshal, continue to be emailed to all those who are not certified as an opportunity to attend certification training, taking advantage of the tuition reimbursement plan as agreed under the CBA.
- The certification working group meets monthly to identify additional opportunities for certification training.
- If there is any capacity in future VFF recruitment training programs, a notification will be sent to those VFFs who require certification training, inviting them to participate.

## **Conclusion**

This semi-annual report highlights Fire Services' progress in volunteer firefighter recruitment, retention, and GSFS compliance with O. Reg 343/22 Firefighter Certification. Our focus on retention is as crucial as our recruitment efforts, evidenced by initiatives like forming a dedicated working group for innovative training opportunities.

Our proactive approach includes participation in the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs' recruitment and retention committee, which helps us combat declining volunteerism. Despite these challenges, our strategic efforts have led to sustainable growth in our volunteer service.

The introduction of mandatory certification by the Ontario Fire Marshal has significantly changed training requirements. Our recent success in certification exams showcases the quality of our training programs. Over the past two years, our commitment to high standards in fire service delivery, operational efficiency, and firefighter health and safety has been evident. Fire Services is on track to certify all GSFS firefighters by the July 01, 2026.

## **Resources Cited**

[O. Reg. 343/22 Firefighter Certification](#)

[Update on Mandatory Firefighter NFPA Certification and 2023 Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment](#)

[Greater Sudbury Fire Services – 2022 Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Update](#)