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***"Please share this very important message"***

## **Proposed Regulation Changes for Volunteer Fire Departments**

On January 22, 2018 the Town of Bancroft met with MCSCS Minister Marie-France Lalonde at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference in Toronto. At that time the proposed regulation changes to the **Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997**, had not been brought to the municipal forefront and the delegation from Bancroft emphasized their concern.

In their submission to the Minister, the Town of Bancroft identified that the requirement for full certification of volunteer fire fighters would not provide increased skill and knowledge for the members in their service delivery to their municipality. It will not provide for a safer or improved service. In the Town's opinion, the proposed regulation for mandatory training and certification will increase the cost of training, decrease ability of community members to join a volunteer service and decrease the retention of volunteers. These increases and potential for additional increases will have a catastrophic effect on Ontario rural volunteer fire services and the public they serve.

On January 25, 2018, three days after the Town's meeting with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) at ROMA, the Ministry released two proposed regulations under the **Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997** that relate to new requirements for:

1. **Mandatory training and certification for firefighters**; and
2. Community risk assessments to inform the delivery of fire protection services.

It is the Town's opinion that the mandatory training and certification in the proposed regulation will not benefit the volunteer service or the public they serve.

The long-term impact on municipalities is critical to accurately determine the scope and impact of the proposed regulation.

The regulations are open for comment until **March 11, 2018** and we urge all rural municipalities, volunteer fire services and the public to provide your comments at the link below:

<http://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/> under "Current Regulatory Proposals."

For more information, please contact Hazel Lambe, CAO/Clerk, at 613-332-3331 x 208 or [hlambe@bancroft.ca](mailto:hlambe@bancroft.ca)



## **Submission to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services**

### **ROMA 2018**

#### **Volunteer Fire Departments Certification**

There are discussions in the municipal sector regarding Provincial changes to the fire service training requirements. The Province is in the progress of establishing a new model that would require mandatory certification of firefighters and municipalities are being kept in the dark on this initiative. The effects of such a proposal would be catastrophic to fire protection in small rural municipalities. Existing volunteer fire services operate under an authority of jurisdiction and this model has a longstanding history of proven success.

Firefighter training under OFC was acceptable until 2012 when NFPA training standards were adopted. Those fire departments that applied for recognition of the firefighters having several years of experience and knowledge fulfilled the grandfathering clause and did not require NFPA certification. It is our understanding that out of over 400 municipal fire departments 100 fire departments did not apply to have their firefighters to be recognized under the grandfathering clause.

Within volunteer fire departments throughout the Province the delivery of services is enhanced to a level as determined by the municipal council within their authority of jurisdiction. For example, not all departments have hydrants, Aerial's, ice and water rescue, medical first response. Within the determined service level, capital, operational and training needs are established.

While it appears that within the new model a municipal council may still establish the level of service any service beyond fire prevention will require a firefighter to complete mandatory certification; level 1 and 2 training. The time commitment to obtain Level 1 and 2 is approximately 200 hours. There are many reasons why this unnecessary requirement will cripple a rural volunteer department. The effect on rural volunteer fire services would be catastrophic. The public expects and relies on fire suppression and prevention services.

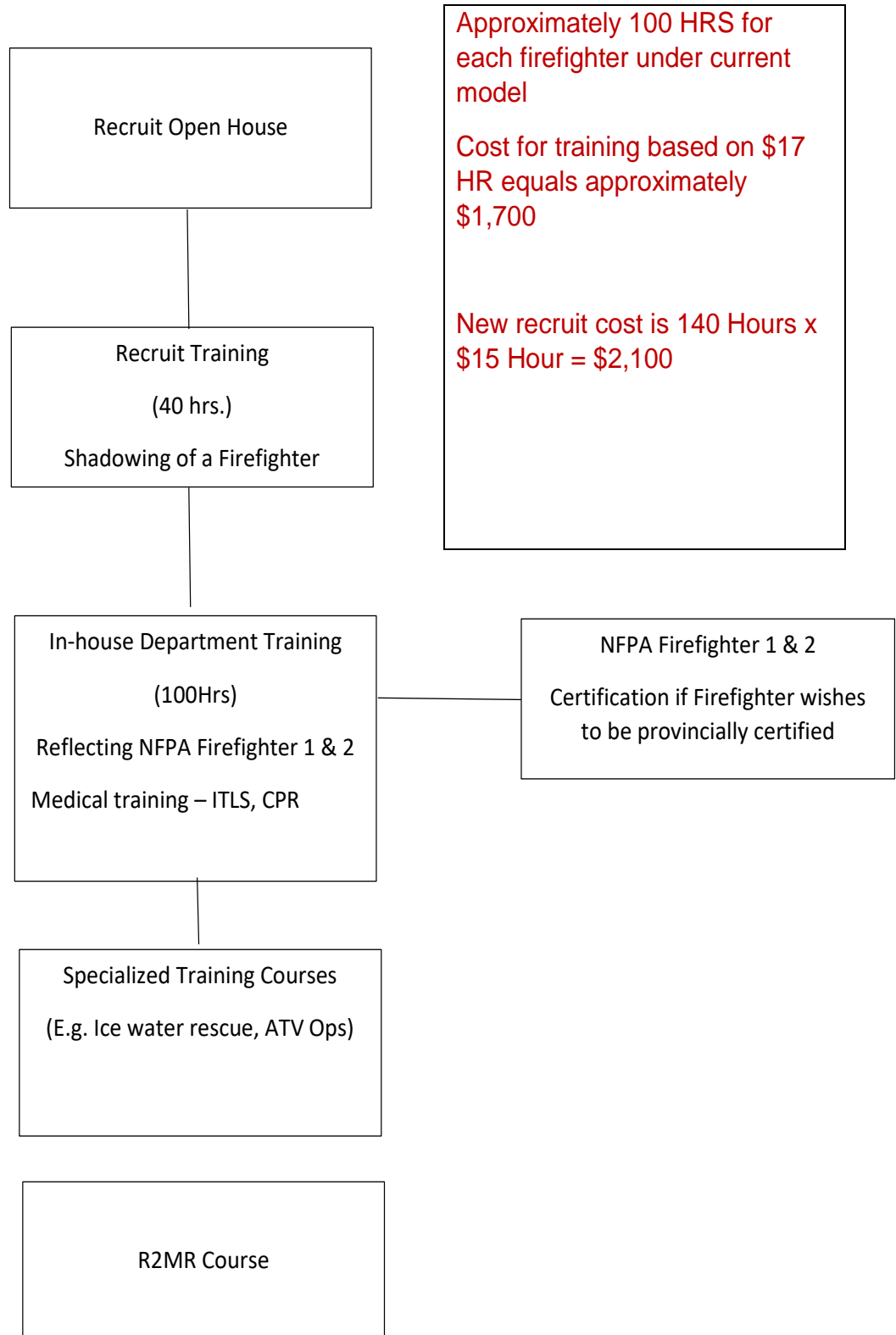
Training for a volunteer under the current model requires ongoing evening and weekend training during times that are compatible within the normal daily activities of individuals who have a strong commitment to their community. Skills achieved through training of full time and volunteer firefighters is equal with the only difference being that the volunteer is trained specifically for the services provided by their department and full time having completed level 1 and 2 training which encompasses all aspects and components of fire suppression. Simply put it is not necessary nor logical that volunteer firefighters are trained in suppression techniques and skills that they will never require.

Recruitment and retention of volunteers is challenging. Additional unnecessary training that cannot be easily accommodated will significantly decrease if not completely paralyze the ability to obtain volunteers that are willing and able to make such sacrifices for a volunteer position. In addition to certification requirements the firefighter must also complete maintenance and apparatus training. The current model of providing in house training by a training officer to NFPA standards is logical and manageable within a volunteer service.

- Volunteers are equally skilled, experienced and trained in comparison to full time firefighters to meet the specific needs of the municipality`s they service.
- The cost of certification of volunteer firefighters will increase municipal budgets to unreasonable amounts. Fire Department services will decrease.
- Recruitment of volunteers will be near impossible due to required time commitment and inability to provide training time flexibility.
- Existing full time Fire Administration in small one and two full time person departments will not be able to accommodate significant after hour training for volunteers to obtain certification. It will extend beyond reasonable hours of work.
- Existing veteran volunteers that have significant value to the service will be discouraged and their retention not obtained.
- Volunteers who have currently demonstrated skilled ability and service to the department may not successfully pass certification and good volunteers will be lost.
- Retention of certified firefighters in a volunteer department is unlikely.
- Ability to maintain level of service while training will be unachievable.
- Decreased fire services will result in decreased property values and municipal economic health will be negatively affected.
- Public outcry will occur and unaffordable demands put on municipalities resulting in financial demands to the province.
- Implementation of mandatory certification of volunteer fire fighters will not change the level firefighter skill for the municipality they are serving.
- Overall what will be achieve is wasted financial investment, unaffordable and unsustainable volunteer department.
- It is extremely difficult to determine why certification of volunteer firefighters is even being considered.
- It is however likely that there would be a potential for additional full-time fire fighters to secure certified employees on a long-term basis to reduce continuous training costs and an unstable workforce. This would result in additional unionized employees.
- It is critical that municipalities be brought into the direct discussions now.

# Current Training Model

(Rates used are for comparative purposes only)



# Certification of Firefighters

Approximately 388 HRS for each firefighter to become certified. Bi-weekly training nights are an extra 100 HRs annually for each firefighter. Equals \$1,700 dollars extra

Cost for training is based on \$17 HR, equals approximately - \$6,596

