

COMMUNIQUÉ

du commissaire des incendies

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ONTARIO FIRE COLLEGE

I am writing today to provide an update regarding the Ontario Fire College (OFC) and the delivery of fire safety training.

Training in Ontario is complex due to the large number of fire departments and differences in their composition and training needs. In 2012, the OFC started piloting alternative training delivery models to increase capacity. Training began at the regional level through Regional Training Centres (RTCs), through online course availability and through blended options and learning contracts which could be delivered at the local level. This modernized approach has increased capacity for training and provides a more affordable, attainable and accessible training program to your departments.

Since moving to a regionalized model, the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) has worked with partners to increase the number of RTCs across the province. With 20 operational as of today (and growing), training is much easier to obtain by not having to travel to Gravenhurst. The OFC has the capacity to train approximately 2,500 fire service personnel per year on campus. A significant number are unable to register for courses as they fill up quickly. With over 4,000 personnel trained off campus each year, the opportunity to train through other modes of delivery has really helped meet the needs of the fire service.

As the OFM continues to transition to a more modernized delivery model, the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst, which has not offered on-site training since the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, will be closed. Once the decommissioning has been completed, the government will oversee upkeep of the 99-acre property and review future possibilities for the site.

Through open dialogue and discussion, we have listened to fire services about the need to increase capacity for training courses and modernize the fire training program. The shift to a blend of online and on-site training offered through RTCs allows us to provide responsive, high quality training to fire services across Ontario. The closure of the OFC Gravenhurst site will also allow us to provide supports to training needs through other mechanisms and support more localized training. As part of this plan, the OFM is purchasing two mobile live fire training units that can be accessed across the province to

bring live fire training to your locations. Efforts will also be made to ensure that specialized equipment available at the OFC is made available to RTCs and other locations so that training can be specifically tailored to your department needs and hosted at a location that reduces the need to send personnel to Gravenhurst, thereby increasing other departmental costs.

These efforts to modernize fire safety in Ontario will better meet the needs of fire services across the province and although the closure of the Ontario Fire College Gravenhurst site does end a longstanding history of firefighter training, the OFM is excited at the opportunities to deliver a more modernized program that will continue to support the training needs of Ontario's fire services.