



## **TOWN OF MINTO**

**DATE:** May 25, 2018

**REPORT TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Chris Harrow

**SUBJECT:** New Fire Protection and Prevention Act Regulations

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### **STRATEGIC PLAN:**

6.4 Maintain and enhance the local volunteer fire fighter model in Minto, and take a leadership role in setting standards for municipalities this size by ensuring training, equipment and vehicles available to volunteers compares with a full time fire service.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Last year, the Province started the process of modernizing the Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA) which hadn't seen a major update since its inception in 1997. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services formed a technical table of fire service members from various groups. The groups were invited or asked directly to be a part of the table under the Ministry's direction.

The technical table was told by the Ministry to focus on three key areas; Firefighter mandatory certifications, community risk assessments and public reporting. It would appear certain groups had more influence on the scope and new regulations than others, but new regulations were finally released earlier in May.

At the February 20 Council meeting staff reported on the potential impact of the legislation in response to AMO's position paper which was also shared with Council. Minto supported AMO's recommended municipal response on the legislation. A copy of that position paper is included with this report.

### **COMMENTS:**

The new regulations are a huge change for the fire service. Never before have there been mandatory certifications for firefighters. The level of training required to be a firefighter in a community has always been set by each Municipality depending on their needs and circumstances. For the most part, the level of training was fairly consistent from municipality to municipality. However, there was always the questions of how trained does a firefighter need to be and what standard should we hold each one to, especially if there is an injury or accident during an incident.

Firefighter certifications are going to change how training is administered at Minto Fire. Anyone who has the desire to move up a rank or become a Firefighter in Minto will have to become certified by the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management. Training levels have been made mandatory now through the new regulations.

We presently, through our County Training Officer run a recruit program for new Firefighters to enable them to become certified. The program is run over six or seven weekends in

spring to early summer. In between each weekend, the recruits are required to go on-line and complete the textbook part of the training. It also prepares them for the practical training they receive on the weekend. At the end of training, recruits write four separate exams to become certified to the Firefighter level. The certification allows them to become interior Firefighters during fire suppression.

New FFPA regulations now require Firefighters who wish to move up the ranks or take on other tasks as well as Firefighting to become certified. For example, a Firefighter wishing to become a Captain now has to become certified to Fire Officer 1 level. A Firefighter wishing to become a Fire Inspector or do Public Education has to become certified to that level. Most of the courses to become certified to the appropriate level are 1 week (40 hours) in length. This is not a monumental task, but definitely a change on how certification occurs. Minto Fire will have to ensure people are certified and prepared to assume new roles when the time arises.

One gray area in the regulation is the need to certify Firefighters to tasks they do on occasion and not on a regular basis. For example, pumper operations are a task many Firefighters do on different occasions. One interpretation of the new regulations is that all Firefighters have to be certified for this task even though they may only perform it once in a while. A new Firefighter would have to be certified as Firefighter Level 2 (4 separate exams) and be certified to Pumper Operations. Again, not a monumental task, but a definite commitment for new Firefighters joining the department.

The good news is the regulation is go-forward legislation beginning July 2019. Any Firefighters hired before July 2019 do not have to be certified for most of the levels they are participating in on the department including Firefighter Level 1 and 2, Pumper Operations and Public Educator. It does not include Fire Investigator, Fire Instructors and Fire Officers will have to be certified. As of January 2020, all levels will require the Firefighter to be certified no matter the date of hire.

Firefighters who have been with previous education or experience can be grandfathered. Fortunately with the experience still on our department, many Firefighters are grandfathered to various levels, including Fire Officer 1 and Fire Instructor 1. This includes most Senior positions and Training staff. Minto Fire will concentrate on succession plans so the next generation is certified for senior positions and the specific courses.

The final area to work on certifying is our technical rescue teams, water rescue and confined space. The regulations state anyone who is employed as a firefighter and perform the specialty rescue services before January 1, 2021 does not have to certify to the standard. However, Minto Fire plans to consult with its two teams and come up with a plan for future certifications and training. This will make sure staff comply with the regulations and have a process in place for the future team members.

Minto Fire is in a good position to meet the regulations without excessive cost because the Town has been progressive in its past training, anticipating new regulations coming into effect. Firefighters are open to certifications and training understanding the need to train and proud to become certified in various levels. Council's support financially and through organizational structures enabled the administration team to prepare for the changes.

The regulations also deal with public reporting and community risk assessments. The community risk assessment does not have to be completed until July 1, 2024. It will have to include profiles such as: Geographic areas, critical infrastructure, building stock, public safety response, demographics, hazards, economics and a few others. Our present risk assessment already contains many of these items. It is due to be updated and will be looked at most likely in 2019. We should have no issue complying with the 2024 deadline for the new regulation.

The final section of the regulation mentioned is public reporting. This includes reporting to the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management response times to incidents and to the fire station, dispatching times and travel times. The deadline to comply with this regulation is January 1, 2020. Minto Fire will have to revamp some of its methods to track time for our emergency responses. This includes looking at a full dispatch upgrade with Guelph Fire. The main difference is trucks and incident commanders would communicate with Guelph to record on scene times and certain benchmarks at incidents. This tracks response times rather than calling to the Station so a Firefighter manually records times.

Staff will continue to look at needs for public reporting including costing the move to full dispatch services. It will also look at migrating towards some technical solutions for the trucks and radio rooms in each of the stations which will help accurately record times during an incident. Senior management anticipated the new regulations for quite some time so that changes have minimal impact on the Firefighters. There are more demands placed on the department, but we are confident in our capacities to handle the workload.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

There will be added training costs and wages in 2019 to accommodate the extra time to be certified. The total amount will be known when detailed training schedules are set with a final figure brought forward for the 2019 budget.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the Council receives the Fire Chief's report New Fire Protection and Prevention Act Regulations and supports the Department moving forward with implementation

Chris Harrow  
Fire Chief