

## Report to Council

**Report Title:** Ontario Fire College Regional Training Centre Project

**Prepared By:** Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer

**Department:** Administration

**Date:** October 27, 2020

**Report Number:** FIRE2020-04                      **File Number:** C11FI

**Attachments:** Training Requirements Flow Chart  
Walkerton Regional Training Centre Memorandum of Understanding

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### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby approves Report Number FIRE2020-04 - Ontario Fire College Regional Training Centre Project, prepared by Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer, and in so doing approves a by-law coming forward to authorize signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Brockton and the Ontario Fire College to secure the intent and location of Brockton's Walkerton Fire Department to represent the Ontario Fire College as a Regional Training Centre

### Report:

#### Background:

For any fire department, ensuring that firefighters receive continuous quality training is a top priority. Over the past few years, there have been regulatory requirements introduced to ensure professional standards for firefighters performing fire suppression for interior and exterior structures. While some of these requirements have been amended or revoked, it is anticipated that further legislation will be introduced in the future requiring particular qualifications for firefighters and it will then be the responsibility of Fire Departments to retain members while figuring out how to balance compliance in training, flexibility in scheduling and cost effectiveness in order to train new recruits to the new compliance requirements to ensure the continuation of quality fire services in the community

#### Analysis:

The OFC defines the three pillars of a Regional Training Centre as accessibility, affordability, and attainability. Being a designated Regional Training Centre (RTC) allows Brockton to provide training in house to both the Walkerton and Elmwood fire departments at a local setting. This minimizes travel outside of the area keeping firefighters at home with their families and available to respond to emergencies while completing the training they require to become suppression firefighters to ensure quality service to our residents. RTC's also have the ability to designate satellite locations and as such would allow us to work with other Bruce County fire

departments to offer a more diverse set of programs locally. This will allow us to spend minimal money and resources to address any gaps in the services offered to the community.

From an affordability standpoint Brockton would be able to offer courses internally at a reduced cost. This would be based on a cost recovery model and would eliminate costly travel expenses. Cost recovery pricing will have to take into account budget items such as building and equipment maintenance and the costs of day to day operation of the fire hall while courses are being run. Economic impact of bringing firefighters to the area for training will also have benefits for Brockton eateries, hotels, and other businesses in the community.

With respect to attainability, firefighter retention becomes more difficult with each passing year especially with respect to firefighter training demands. Currently the only government subsidised training is at the OFC in Gravenhurst however only two (2) firefighters per department are granted access to each course each year. Further the current training program requires a minimum of 5 weeks in class training in addition to in excess of 60 hrs of online training (see attached - Certification Flow Chart with Timelines). This is typically unattainable for a volunteer over a short term which means a recruit could potentially take years to attain the credentials required to be a suppression firefighter. As an RTC, the Walkerton Fire Department would have the ability to run programs with flexible scheduling and would not be bound by the course acceptance policy allowing for recruit training requirements to be met in a timely manner.

The Memorandum of Understanding with the Ontario Fire College to establish an RTC based in Walkerton has been attached for Council's review (the "MOU"). Volunteer members have put significant time, effort and research into bringing this proposal to fruition over the course of the past year and are at the stage where securing the agreement for the RTC is critical to moving forward. At this time, a number of fire departments across the Province are beginning to consider this model, and it is recommended that this MOU be signed as soon as possible to ensure that Brockton does not lose out on this opportunity to another municipality, noting that the MOU can be terminated by either party with only thirty (30) days written notice. Only one RTC is permitted within a one hour radius.

Acting Fire Chief of the Walkerton Fire Department, Glen Wilhelm, Training Officer Jeff Bradley and Chris Wilson, Volunteer Firefighter will be in attendance at the meeting via Zoom to answer any questions Council may have. Further details about the operational aspects of the proposed RTC will be brought forward at a future date once the MOU has been signed and Brockton's status with the Ontario Fire College preserved. There are no significant expenses known at this time for Brockton associated with the MOU as the courses would be offered on a cost recovery basis. However, a detailed report will follow prior to implementation of course being offered in the Fire Hall which will include consideration of the staff oversight required.

Beyond the immediate cost savings involved in training firefighters locally, there is a larger strategic benefit to establishing an RTC as it would bolster Walkerton's reputation as a centre for training and oversight.

### **Sustainability Checklist:**

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision?

Yes

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy?   | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? | Yes |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity?       | N/A |
| • Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity?             | Yes |

**Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:**

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

There are no known significant expenses anticipated with this proposal. The proposal will likely result in significant training cost savings for the Fire Departments over the next few years.

**Reviewed By:**



**Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer**

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**Respectfully Submitted by:**



**Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer**