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Subject: Closure of the Ontario Fire College
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Dear Municipal Leaders:

We are writing to you regarding the province's announcement on January 13, 2021, of the impending closure of the Gravenhurst campus of the Ontario Fire College on March 31, 2021.

We know that at least two of the three associations quoted in the Ontario Government's press release were not informed that the government would close the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst!

The Ontario Government says its plan to modernize and regionalize fire service training will be more cost-effective and accessible to municipalities. Yet, the government has not shared a plan showing how these changes will provide training of equal value in a more cost-effective and accessible manner for municipalities across Ontario.

The province's regionalization model currently has Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with a mixed bag of 20 "Regional Training Centres" (RTCs) located in various parts of Ontario. The municipalities' cost to send one firefighter to an RTC range between \$300 and \$1,200 for the course alone. This cost does not include accommodations or meals.

The Gravenhurst campus of the Ontario Fire College has modern facilities and equipment where subject matter experts provide training in all fire service disciplines. The cost is \$65 for a municipality to send one firefighter to the college. That cost includes onsite accommodations and three meals a day. In shifting firefighter training to RTCs, the price for training our firefighters will shift to your municipality's taxpayers. If the government revives [O. Reg 379/18](#) (firefighter certification) while shuttering the college, the growth in training demand and cost will be significant.

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, as amended, requires the fire marshal to "develop training programs and evaluation systems for persons involved in the provision of fire protection services." It also stipulates the fire marshal must "provide programs to improve practices relating to fire protection services" and "maintain and operate a central fire college."

As municipal leaders, would you prefer an affordable, cost-effective training model that keeps students in one location with up-to-date, technically accurate training facilities led by subject matter experts? Or a more expensive training model in multiple facilities that cannot match what the Ontario Fire College provides?

Please stand with us against this ill-conceived closure of the Ontario Fire College and the government's undefined plan. Let's keep your firefighters and community safe by keeping the ONLY provincial fire training facility in Ontario open. As municipal councils, we ask that you send a strong letter of rejection of this plan to your local Member of Provincial Parliament and lobby the Doug Ford government to reverse its decision.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or a need for further information please let us know.

Regards,

Chris McConnell
President, OPSEU Local 317

(Representing the workers of the Ontario Fire College)

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