



# OPFFA

## OFFICE

Yonge & Wellesley Offices on the Park,  
Suite 333, 15 Wellesley Street West,  
Toronto, ON, M4Y 0G7  
(905) 681-7111  
Fax (905) 681-1489

ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Ontario Government Invests in Firefighter Health & Safety: *Funding for Behavioural Health and Mayday Training.***

The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the representative voice for 12,000 career firefighters in Ontario, commends the provincial government for investing in training and development for Ontario's professional firefighters.

This morning Premier Ford and Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, joined by Solicitor General Michael Kerzner, announced that Ontario's government is investing more than \$430,000 towards Fire Ground Survival ("FGS") and Peer Support training for OPFFA members.

The Fire Ground Survival program is the most comprehensive survival skills and MAYDAY program currently available within the fire service. The program was developed, and is facilitated by, the International Fire Fighters Association ("IAFF") to ensure firefighters are trained to perform potentially life-saving actions if they become lost, disoriented, injured, low on air, or trapped.

Firefighter fatality data has shown that firefighters becoming trapped and disoriented represent the largest portion of structural fire ground fatalities. The incidents in which firefighters have lost their lives, or lived to talk about it, have a consistent theme - inadequate situational awareness puts them at risk. Smoke, low visibility, lack of oxygen, structural instability, and an unpredictable fire ground can cause even the most seasoned firefighter to become disoriented, injured or trapped during a structural fire or emergency incident. It's not a matter of IF the Mayday happens, it's WHEN.

"We are thrilled with the announcement," said Greg Horton, President of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. "Professional development and capacity building are core value propositions the OPFFA offers its members. The Association plays a unique role in assessing the continuing education needs of its members and delivering programs to meet those needs. While there is ample training on how to put out a fire and save lives, there hasn't been adequate training on firefighter survival."

Horton shared that the funding will also be used to purchase a uniquely designed trailer and props that simulate various high-risk conditions, to be utilized by the newly certified trainers to deliver regional training across the province.

The funding will also be used to host a Peer Support course; a program designed to develop trained Peer Supporters who will have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide support to their fellow firefighters who are struggling with behavioural health issues.

Both courses will be offered in October 2023, at the OPFFA's DeFazio Taylor Health and Safety Labour seminar in Toronto, which has become the largest event of its kind in Canada.

"Through this funding, we hope to reduce the economic barriers municipalities across the province face, by providing access to professional development for their employees that otherwise would be inaccessible."

- Bob McCutcheon, Secretary-Treasurer

### **ABOUT:**

The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association ("OPFFA") provides leadership, education, support, and representation for 12,000 career firefighters in over 80 cities, towns, and regions, servicing over 85% of Ontario's population. Today's professional firefighter does more than just fight fires. In communities across Ontario, they are available 24/7, 365 days a year to respond quickly to serious medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous materials calls, industrial accidents, ice/water, and other technical rescues. OPFFA members perform community outreach to educate the public on safety and fire prevention, and support local charities.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Marcia Kim

Executive Director, Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association

mkim@ontariofirefighters.org | 905-681-7111 x101

