



MEDIA RELEASE

Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services Recognized for its Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Efforts

For Immediate Release

June 27, 2023

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is proud to announce that the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) has awarded the 2023 VFIS Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Award to Fire Chief Jay Plato and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire and Emergency Services Department.

This award recognizes Fire Chiefs and their Departments' excellence in recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters. The success of the Town's volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention efforts is primarily due to the following tactics and initiatives:

Recruitment:

- Implementing a comprehensive recruitment program with a recruitment guide, information sessions at Fire Stations in all five (5) villages, and booths at public events.
- Conducting surveys after every recruitment stage to gather information to be applied during future recruitment efforts.
- Producing and sharing a professional recruitment video created by the Niagara Regional Fire Chiefs Association.
- Utilizing previous volunteer firefighter recruits as ambassadors and mentors for new candidates.

Retention:

- Training and equipping firefighters in a manner that meets or exceeds comparable career firefighting organizations.
- Implementing health and wellness initiatives such as providing access to gyms within select Fire Stations, hosting group workouts, and mobility training.
- Implementing leadership libraries in each Fire Station to encourage continuous learning and skill development.



- Offering additional professional development opportunities outside of the standard firefighting curriculum.
- Organizing team building/social events for members.

"The Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services Department's rigorous recruitment program positively serves the community's growing and diverse needs," stated Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa. "On behalf of Town Council, thank you to Fire Chief Jay Plato and your leadership team for your determination and creativity in successfully recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters."

"Fire Chief Jay Plato has been instrumental in fostering an organizational culture that embraces a continuous improvement mindset," stated CAO Marnie Cluckie. "Congratulations and thank you to the entire Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services Department and our many volunteer firefighters for their unwavering commitment to protecting our community. Their selfless service, bravery, and professionalism are truly commendable."

"It is a great honour for not only me but the entire team to be recognized at a provincial level for the efforts being made toward consistent improvements in recruiting and retaining firefighters for the betterment of the community," stated Fire Chief Jay Plato. "The Fire & Emergency Services Department's strategic goals and objectives have achieved great outcomes, and our team aims to continuously advance the volunteer firefighter model."

The Town's Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Program candidates complete over 300 hours of training and testing over nine months before becoming active firefighters. In 2023, eleven volunteers graduated from the Recruitment Program, and the Town is thrilled to have these new recruits join the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire family.

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Media Contact:

Marah Minor, Community Engagement and Communications Coordinator
905-468-3266 | communications@notl.com