

Glad it's all over

OUR READERS WRITE

As a newbie in town, I remained neutral on the OPP vs SPS issue because I haven't been here long enough.

The reason I attended council meetings was because I was lonely with no friends here, and wanted something to do. My husband would put my son to bed every second Monday as I excitedly attended my first Town Council meeting, only to find six other Shelburne residents there. No matter, I quickly made friendships with all six, happy to finally have friends here.

Every second Monday I would see the same six faces attend the meetings. We watched and listened to Mayor Wade Mills and the other Town Councillors tackle important issues. The issue of arsenic levels in our water came up one meeting. Then a few meetings later, the six of us residents learned with dismay that the Provincial government did not come through with the funding to fix the water. I was appalled. I did not see the town fill the hall and demand our MPP for the funding that was expected for clean water in Shelburne.

Yet when the police issue came up, the hall was filled. Yes, this was/is a very important issue. Jobs were at stake, community safety was at stake, and a historical institution in Shelburne was in jeopardy. But what puzzled me is how some of the people in town handled it. They yelled into the microphone, they were rude to the councillors, and when I went up to the microphone merely to correct one resident, she started arguing with me rather than put her hand up to have her turn... and after the meeting, another lady came up and rudely started speaking to me until I asked her for her name. A third lady was so upset about it, that she was rude to me in her store outside of the meeting. I was just clarifying something. This was not war.

Although it was truly wonderful to see the hall full, it was truly horrible to see how some of these people spoke. Some were like bullies. That being said, there were a few people who were very nice, made nice presentations at the microphone politely, followed the process and even treated me nicely when I asked questions, rather than getting defensive.

The Chair of the Police Services Board Mike Fazackerley was one of them, Dan Sample was fabulous, and also, the father of one of officers and also an attendee at the United Trinity Church was gracious. What nice people. That is called public discourse, democracy, and just plain polite.

The Mayor and councillors must have been in such a difficult spot. They've been living in this town, made friendships with the officers, and now as elected officials they have to look out for the Town's budget and taxes and be fiscally responsible. I have to give it to them, they remained calm in the face of some rudeness thrown at them, they answered back politely and treated everyone with respect. They either have thick skin, or are exceptional human beings. Over and over, the town's people came up and said that they would take the tax increases for these officers.

The Town Council voted to keep the Shelburne Police. I have to admit, I am relieved. I moved to this town with my husband and son because it is known for its safe neighbourhoods and friendly residents. But the town also knows that one of the presentations included an eventual 14 percent increase to keep the police. What's ironic, is that our council doesn't even get paid full-time to be our councillors, deputy mayor or mayor. If anything, there should be a tax levy to pay them full-time to do the job they are doing.

This year we are having an increase of just below 3 percent for our taxes (if I'm correct). With over 2,000 residents coming into our town by the end of next year, we will have a huge increase in revenue. That's a huge growth. Our councillors put themselves last, and voted to save the jobs of our officers only because we love these officers, heck, my 6 year old son loves sitting in the drivers seat and pressing the blaring siren at every festival. But, God knows they are not cheap.

For every person that came out for these police meetings, I invite them to join me in these meetings with the six other regulars to discuss our water, land, developments and also our councillors' salaries so that they can actually get paid full-time one day. We

should challenge our MPP for the water issue.

I truly hope now that the police issue is over?, people still come to the meetings, but be polite in their demeanour, treat each other with respect, and be as everyone knows Shelburne as: the friendly town?.

Bella Carter

Shelburne resident