

## Shelburne police officers still absorbing? Council's decision to disband local force

Written By PAULA BROWN

It has been a week since the decision was made, by Shelburne Town Council, to disband Shelburne Police Services and bring in OPP, and the decision is still sinking in for SPS officers.

"Right now everybody is just trying to absorb that this has happened, because it honestly doesn't seem real yet," said Jennifer Roach, president of the Shelburne Police Association.

"Everybody's sad to see Shelburne police go, it's 141 years of history, and we're all very proud to work here. I mean, we all made a conscious decision to choose the Town of Shelburne for our police employment," Roach added.

Shelburne Town Council held a special council meeting last Wednesday (July 15), where they voted unanimously in favour to bring OPP in to police the town, disbanding the local force that has been around since 1879.

"We had a feeling just given the financial situation, and after reading the CAO's report and seeing the comparison with our costing versus OPP costing, we weren't surprised by the outcome," said Roach.

During the process leading up to the council's decision a recent survey commissioned by the Shelburne Police Association showed that the local force's officers would find the transition to OPP to be "desirable". One of the questions in the survey asked Shelburne Police officers how they felt about the transition to OPP and all respondents (100%) noted it would have a positive effect on job satisfaction, and provide additional opportunities for advancement and access to better training.

"Everybody in general is very happy to have a decision," said Roach. "At least we can move forward now."

In an interview with the FreePress Mayor Wade Mills spoke about the consensus he has seen from officers in the days since the decision was made.

"I think the general consensus is that everybody is just happy that a decision had been made," said Mills. "There's some certainty again."

Mills also added "They deserve the decision one way or another so that they can have some peace and stability in their lives again."

With the decision now made, the necessary paperwork has been sent in by Town staff members accepting the proposal made by the OPP. The process of disbanding the force will look similar to the process taken by Orangeville Council following their decision to disband the Orangeville Police Service in December of 2019. An official request to disband the local force will be submitted to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCPC), who will sign-off on the disbandment.

Preparing for the transition Roach says they have an idea of what to expect after watching Orangeville go through the process, but they are also still taking in the decision.

"Right now we're just absorbing that it's even happened and then next steps are getting paperwork together to start the application process," Roach said.