

Mayor Mills reflects on Shelburne's steps towards diversity

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The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police has been a watershed moment throughout North America, leading to millions of people protesting racial injustice worldwide.

Despite not being the first time a black man has died at the hands of law enforcement, that incident became a tipping point for a lot of people.

Shelburne Mayor Wade Mills noted, the struggle has been ongoing for 400 years and he expects that it isn't going to be solved here overnight.

However, because of the rapidly changing demographics in Shelburne presently, he feels that the Town has a role to play and that leaders here have a responsibility to step up and lead every member of the community, not just those who have lived locally for generations.

When he gave his acceptance speech at the swearing in ceremonies for Council, Wade said that Shelburne had to become home for all residents regardless of their history here.

He went onto say how proud he is of what has been done, through the Anti-Racism Task Force, saying that Shelburne has been ahead of the charge for many municipalities, even some of the larger urban centres in the Province.

Mayor Mills mentioned that there were a number of pretty uncomfortable conversations about these issues, but ultimately they're necessary to move forward and grow.

He says you have to try to understand everyone's perspectives on these issues.

What the Anti Racism Task Force discussions brought to light for Wade was that despite the changing demographic in Shelburne's population, there was and still is a degree of racism here, locally.

He says while it isn't seen at the governance or Town administration level, it's present local in grocery stores or other businesses, out in the schoolyards, making a significant impact on those affected.

One of the biggest points of contention in Mayor Mills political career has been the policing issue in Shelburne. It started when he was a Councillor and has culminated during his two years as Mayor.

To say it was contentious would be an understatement, but it has also been eye opening, both in the process and in the result.

It began with the Police Services Board coming to Council with a demand for a new \$8 million building, which in turn triggered the first OPP costing, which was eventually turned down in the summer of 2019.

In December of 2019, Orangeville Council voted to accept their costing and transition to having the OPP police the town. Once this happened it was revealed that Shelburne depended on certain Orangeville Police Service resources and services. Something that was unknown to the Councils of either town, so Shelburne unanimously asked for a second costing, which was accepted unanimously in early summer, when they decided to transition.

Due to training restrictions, the actual transition will not take place until February of 2021.

Currently, Council is awaiting approval from the OCPC, but there are no indications of any problems on that front.

In the end, everyone appears to be happy with the end results, including the officers and the Council.