

An OFM recommendation confusing, costly

After having made it abundantly clear that municipal councils, and not fire boards, are responsible for providing fire protection services, the Ontario Fire Marshall has confused the issue by recommending that the councils of the municipalities covered in his January 2013 review should create an advisory committee to develop, co-ordinate, review and update establishing and regulating bylaws, fire board agreements, fire-related bylaws, policies and operating guidelines....?

In a letter to the office of the OFM following a meeting of town council as a working group, CAO John Telfer says, "It was noted that additional clarification would be needed around recommendation #6, so that we are aware of exactly what is expected on this item. An advisory team is currently the Shelburne and District Fire Board and we are trying to identify and resolve the recommendations based from the Town of Shelburne's point of view."

Nonetheless, according to a schedule of times to complete all 30 of the OFM's recommendations, the town would complete No. 6 within three to six months. At the same time, it would undertake perfection of a filing system for fire inspection reports.

There were 30 recommendations in the OFM report. Ten of those have already been completed, and the schedule for all 30 runs to 24 months.

As previously reported, most of the recommendations are minor or administrative in nature, and not all apply to each and every fire department involved, i.e. Shelburne, Honeywood and Rosemont.

The one contentious recommendation is the OFM's call for routine fire inspections and identification of high risk areas, as well as the laying of charges in the event of violations.

Realistically, this recommendation is being viewed as requiring the engagement of a full-time inspector, rather than a volunteer on a part-time basis, a fact that area councillors see as one more tax burden.

Mayor Ed Crewson, in a recent casual discussion, didn't feel inclined to hire a full-time inspector who would have to be paid \$100,000 or more, but wouldn't necessarily be fighting fires.

The Shelburne District Fire Department serves the town, as well as parts of Amaranth, Melancthon, Mono and Mulmur. All municipalities pay a share of the costs of the department.

By Wes Keller