

Five things you should know about OPP municipal policing

There is currently a healthy and important debate underway about the cost of policing in Ontario and future sustainability. Part of that discussion involves how the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) delivers police services to 324 municipalities and our current billing model, which is under review. In the interest of contributing to informed debate, here are five things everyone who lives in an OPP-policed municipality should know.

1. All municipalities must provide policing services to their constituents. They can do this in a several ways. Just one of these is contracting services from the OPP under Section 10 of the Police Services Act (PSA). A municipality may also: establish a police service; enter into an agreement with one or more other municipal councils to constitute a joint police service board; enter into an agreement with one or more councils to amalgamate their police services; or contract services from an adjacent police service (a police service that shares a political boundary with the contracting municipality).

If none of these choices are exercised, policing services are provided by default by the OPP under Section 5.1 of the PSA. Municipalities have these policing choices and many decide on the OPP for a variety of good reasons. I am pleased to report that OPP-policed communities report a high level of satisfaction with our services.

2. Provincial regulations require the full and fair cost recovery from municipalities for OPP services. The OPP and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services are in the midst of a Billing Model Review that will result in a fairer, more transparent and less complex process ? something many municipalities have demanded. The total revenues recovered under the new model will still be solely cost recovery, but some municipalities will pay more and some will pay less.

3. The Provincial Auditor General has also recommended that the Ontario Provincial Police should simplify its costing and billing methods.

He also said the OPP should make the billing and costing methods more transparent and ?address the issues that result in municipalities paying different rates? (2012 Provincial Audit). In 2015, under the proposed billing model an estimated base cost per household of \$260 would be charged along with a cost for Calls for Service. OPP-policed municipalities that currently pay lower than \$300 per household should see their policing costs rise; municipalities that currently pay more than \$400 per household should see their policing costs drop. Let's be honest, some municipalities have enjoyed unrealistically low policing costs with the OPP for many years, while others have paid much higher per household due to a complex billing process. Addressing this discrepancy is the right thing to do, although we acknowledge that the transition for the municipalities who will experience rising costs will be difficult. The Ontario government is considering ways to lessen the financial impact during the transition to a new billing model.

4. The OPP Cost Recovery Formula resulted in a reduction of one per cent in billing for direct operating expenses (gas, uniforms, computers, etc.) from 2010 to 2013. This was a significant accomplishment compared to other police services which are also struggling with rising costs in a time of restraint. I must acknowledge that uniform salaries, which are not part of the Cost Recovery Formula, are 80 to 85 per cent of the overall costs charged to OPP-policed municipalities. After two years without receiving a general increase in wages (2012, 2013), OPP officers received an increase of 8.55 per cent in 2014 to raise the salary of an OPP Provincial Constable to be equal to that of the highest paid police service in the province. The OPP will have to recover these costs in the municipalities it polices.

5. Regardless of any changes to billing and the wage raise in 2014, the OPP remains the most cost-effective policing option for many municipalities in Ontario. OPP costs, on average, are less than half of the average cost of municipal police services in the province (based on OPP and Ministry of Finance data). While the per household cost of policing can vary widely under the current billing model, our low per household cost average tells us that the OPP is doing a really good job of being cost-effective and efficient.

The men and the women of the OPP are dedicated professionals who provide a wide range of policing services to Ontario's communities. We continue to work hard each and every day to keep the trust and confidence of the people of this province. We look forward to continuing to work with all of our partners to ensure a safe and secure Ontario.

To view a more detailed video statement on this subject by Superintendent Philbin, visit the OPP YouTube channel at: YouTube
Video: [YouTube.com/watch?v=wJ70dn3X2LU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ70dn3X2LU)

By Superintendent Rick Philbin, OPP