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Consultants Report and Analysis of OPP vs SPS

Monday night saw a modicum of Shelburne residents attend the Public Meeting to hear the Consultants report and findings on the costs and service levels associated with policing , in the Town, by both the existing Shelburne Police Service and the Ontario Provincial Police .Council had decided to hire a consultant to make these evaluations, in order to insure that the results were transparent, unbiased and definitive. The firm they chose, was Pomax, which has been doing these types of evaluations for over 22 years and are highly respected in the field, having worked for numerous municipalities, governments and the military. The gentleman who compiled the Shelburne evaluation, was Mr. Jon Hambides, a principal in the company.

Like Mr. Hambides, I am going to reveal the outcome of the report, before explaining how that result was compiled. In short and I quote, ?As a result of our review we have come to the conclusion that evidence indicates that the same quality and level of policing service currently experienced by the Town of Shelburne will continue if the town decides to contract with the OPP, but at a much lower cost.?

Pomax does not allow personal opinion or personal agendas to play a part or influence their evaluations and remain committed to objective assessment supported by evidence. Their recommendation is that the Town should contract with the OPP for it's policing needs.

Regardless, however, we should still look at how they reached this assessment. Their complete report with all of the statistics and budgets is currently available on the Town website, so I am not going to repeat it all verbatim here. Rather, I will review the highlights and key factors that brought them to their conclusion. Pomax took into account the following, expected population and dwelling changes in town, the OPP transitional costing proposal, calls for service costs, using the OPP billing model, capital expense forecasts for the SPS, capital expense estimates for the OPP for the transitional period, three years and the capital expectations until 2029, the amortization schedules for loans of $3million and $7 million dollars for possible renovations to SPS facilities and the estimated operational costs for the SPS for each year of the 10 year period 2020-2029 using three staffing scenarios.

They calculated the revenue expectations for each scenario, the asset disposal for each scenario, severance and pension protection costs for SPS, should the town choose OPP, adjustments to account for recent OPP arbitration awards for employees, SPS expected salary increases, applicable legislation, a survey of 22 municipalities being policed by the OPP and the comments and concerns of the residents of Shelburne, through the media, the online survey and the public meetings.

There were seven policing options that were put forward for this report, ranging from the absolute most favourable to the SPS, to the least favourable. In all cases, the OPP were significantly less expensive. The best case scenario for the SPS, was to leave everything at the status quo, with no changes to the facilities and no increases in staff for the next ten years, although the probability of this was extremely low. The most probable option, was with compliment increases as requested by the Chief and a $3 million dollar renovation to the existing facility. The worst case scenario for the Shelburne force, was with compliment increases as requested by the Chief and a $7 million dollar capital expense for a police facility. The other four options were variations of these and can be seen in the online report. In the most advantageous scenario, the Town would have an estimated savings of over $4million dollars over the ten year period, having recouped all of the costs associated with the changeover, by 2025. Scenario number two, would see the Town save over $10 million dollars and would recoup the losses by 2023 and in the worst case scenario for the SPS, the town of Shelburne would save over $12 million dollars and recoup the losses by 2022.

All police services in Ontario are mandated, by the Police Services Act, to provide the exact same level of policing without exception. This can be accomplished in co-operation with larger forces, such as the OPP or on their own. The core activities of a policing organization, are as follows. 1) prevent crime, 2) enforce laws, 3) helping victims, 4) keeping public order and finally, responding too emergencies. They are also, committed to six guiding principles. They must ensure the safety and security of all people and property . They must safeguard the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code. They must work closely with the communities they serve. They must respect the victims of crime and work to understand their needs. They must be sensitive to the diverse, multiracial and multicultural character of Ontario society

and they must ensure that police services are representative of the communities they serve. As a result, the report concluded that from a standards point of view the Town of Shelburne would experience, at the least, the same standard of policing form the OPP as from the SPS.

In the matter of the community concerns and inquiries, the consultant concluded that all of these issues, such as officers in schools, response times, local knowledge and the role of the Police Services Board, would be met by the OPP, but again, at a much lower cost.

One of the issues, that continually raises it's head around this debate, is the matter of response times. The consultant concluded that OPP response times would be equal to that of the SPS. Under the Opp scenerio Shelburne is being designated as it's own zone, with it's own officers. Most of whom will be the same officers currently on the SPS. These officers are assigned to duties ? in their Zone?, not elsewhere. As currently happens, with SPS, in the advent of an emergency, outside their zone, officers may be called upon to assist. This is a normal part of policing that happens ON OCCASION, not every day. When this does happen, the officer(s) are returned to their Zone as soon as possible, or other officers, in the case of the OPP, are sent to replace them until they return. At no time will Shelburne be left without police protection, of any kind.

In conclusion, the consultants report, should you want to see an informed by evidence response, to the question, is well worth reading, all 73 pages of it. It provides a definitive assessment of all the facts and factors and it is unequivocal in its resolve to have the Town of Shelburne contract with the OPP for policing services. The savings to the town can't be overlooked if the service and security will remain the same.