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One final chance to make your feelings known on Town?s policing issue

OUR READERS WRITE

The article by your staff reporter, Julia Lloyd, did a valiant creation of the Town Council meeting on Monday, June 10, 2109. However, I believe that my presentation was not entirely captured and I would bring to the attention of all residents/businesses of Shelburne my statement to Town Council.

Council will make its most important historical decision regarding 140 years of Shelburne Police Service on Monday, June 24, 2019.

Council ?Are you willing to give up the Shelburne police service' for what ultimately will be for fiscal motivations only?

Our police service has a long demonstrated history of providing an excellent service to the community using sound financial strategies. Let's not abandon the future because of the lack of foresight from the past.

History has shown that while contracts with the OPP initially seem like a quick fix to financial pressures, there is ultimately always a price that will be paid by the communities and citizens affected.

The very definition of a community police service such as what we have had here for the past 140 years is tailored to our community.

Our police service, the men and women of our service, live in our community, serve our community, and support our community.

The Shelburne Police Service will never be expected to support an operational pressure elsewhere in the Province.

Shelburne Police Service Police will not have to worry about what pressures other areas within Dufferin County are facing, and then have to allocate staff to support that. That's because it's our community police service, not a provincial police service.

There is always talk that Shelburne Police is too small to survive, that it lacks all of the services of the larger police services and in our case, the latter is certainly true. But we must ensure that all of the facts are exposed before such a critical decision, one that will affect our community forever, is decided.

A police service agreement with the OPP is not a one price for all services approach. The agreement would be for basic police services, a provincial answer to our community need. If for example, other services were required, such as a traffic management enforcement, forensic identification, specialized criminal investigation, or a host of others, then there is an additional fee allocated. So the argument that if the OPP serviced Shelburne then we would have those services at no additional cost rings hollow.

The OPP faces the same demands as any police service in Ontario. They have a fixed number of officers, a budget that has recently seen a 42 million dollar cut, and a growing rate of retirements that stresses their ability to meet minimum staffing levels. These are the realities facing all police services; the big difference is that the OPP is responsible to patrol over one million square kilometres of land and 174,000 square kilometres of water to a population of approximately 3 million people versus 6.45 kilometres and a population of approximately 8,126 for the Shelburne Police Service.

Which description sounds more like community policing to you?

Anyone driving through our town can't help but notice signs stating ?Keep our Shelburne Police Service' sprouting up on lawns everywhere? Petitions signed by residents and businesses have been submitted to Town Council. The community is energized.

And it's not just the adults; our next generation of voting citizens are now engaged. Students from Central Dufferin District High

School are passionate and mobilized and also demand to have a voice in this decision that will affect their future. A decision of this magnitude cannot be made in isolation, it's a community decision and the community that you serve, have sworn an oath to, demands to be heard.

So the question ultimately becomes this. Yes the town is facing fiscal pressures but fortunately the town is also witnessing tremendous growth that is unprecedented in Shelburne's history. Growth always equals increased levels of property taxes which should equal improved or enhanced community services. The reality is that over time, growth managed properly will reduce or eliminate the fiscal pressures.

So is this Council prepared to fundamentally change the policing tradition in Shelburne, one that has a proud 140 year history based on community service, tailored to our needs and expectations?

Do we exchange that for a provincial one size fits all answer, one tailored to 3 million people where the influence that Shelburne would have based on overall population, would be about .003%?

And let's not forget, this conversation started simply to save some money today while in the near future revenues will grow.

If you decide to go with the opp costing service, this decision once made will be massively costly if ever to be reversed.

This decision will become your community legacy.

So, you, the reader, the community. Get in touch with your elected officials and let them know what you'd like to see happen to policing services in Shelburne. While you still have the chance.

Len Mikulich

Shelburne resident