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Shelburne Council endorses new county-wide towing bylaw

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Shelburne has voted unanimously in support of a bylaw regulating towing services within the region.

During their council meeting on Monday (Nov. 9), Shelburne Town Council received a report from OPP Staff Sgt. Nicol Randall regarding options and recommendations for a tow truck licensing bylaw. Following the report councillors voted with a unanimous ?yes? in the development of the bylaw.

?As far as our local operators go this seems to be something supported within the industry,? said Mayor Wade Mills.

Dufferin County originally enacted a bylaw that regulated the towing industry within the region in 2009, essentially establishing the Dufferin Area Towing Association (DATA). DATA was used by the OPP rotationally for collisions helping to eliminate tow trucks racing to collisions, inconsistent rate charges and upselling services.

In the report Staff Sgt. Randall noted that due to the inability to enforce the bylaw, it was rescinded in 2018.

In recent years, violence related to the towing industry has increased in the GTA which include multiple trucks being burned, shootings, assaults, and at least one murder. The report given to council said that Dufferin County have experienced an increase in aggressive selling techniques that have been observed by police.

?There have been complaints of ?chasing', harassment between tow operators and allegations of officers conducting unfair practices (using their cell phones to call a tow truck). Some officers describe it as the ?wild west',? writes Randall.

The Dufferin OPP is recommending that a co-ordinated, regulatory bylaw be administer by a single municipality. The regulatory bylaw requires inspections, criminal record checks, equipment standards, standardized business practices, and rates, which the report says will ?dramatically? reduce the number of incidents related to towing within the county.

Dave Johnston, co-owner of Shelburne Tire & Towing Inc, spoke with the Free Press about voting to support a bylaw regulating tow trucks in the area.

Johnston said that the bylaw is ?long overdue? but that it has to be enforced.

?There's lots of ?fly by night' towing companies that don't have many guidelines or restrictions, or even pay schedules, that's all got to be in place, and it's got to be enforces.?

Adding he said, ?I think the towing industry is probably one of the only industries that you can basically get a truck, put somebody in there with no experience whatsoever, and away you go, you're towing. That's ridiculous, you've got to have training, and you've got to have experience, experience dealing with people and experience with vehicles.?

Other municipalities in Dufferin County have voted to support the bylaw, including Melanchthon, Mono, and Amaranth.