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Shelburne Council hosts special community meeting to discuss transitioning to OPP

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Shelburne Town Council held a special meeting on Tuesday (July 7) for a public information session from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

The meeting was an opportunity for Council and the community to ask their questions following the second OPP costing, presented back on June 22.

Similar to the first costing public information session that took place in April 2019, elected officials and community members raised question regarding response times, financial costs, and police presence for local youth in the schools. The public information presentation was presented by OPP Sgt. Ken Kee and Staff Sgt. Nicol Randall.

Leonard Guchardi asked if the OPP would guarantee the same level of engagement with the schools.

?The same level of service can be expected if the OPP were to be chosen and the OPP is open to working with the community to enhance those relationships, it is expected that the faces you see on the current Shelburne Police Service should a decision to transition to OPP will be the same face you see in the community,? said Sgt. Kee.

Regarding questions about response times Sgt. Kee said that the OPP does not track response times and that he couldn't offer any guarantees for response times but added Shelburne residents can expect the same level of service they've grown accustomed to.

Residents also brought up questions regarding Leamington, Ont., who recently terminated their $5.4 million contract with the OPP following discrepancies between the Town and OPP on the level of policing and how it could be avoid in Shelburne.

?OPP isn't going to leave after the contract ends,? said Kee. ?The OPP will still provide services under a non-contract arrangement until a decision is made by the municipality and arrangements are in place for another police service to take over.?

Speaking on the difference of rural and urban policing Kee said that in OPP services there is no distinction between the two and that the OPP uses a model that allows for the sharing of resources.

Shelburne resident Teneisha Campbell raised the question on the steps that will be taken by OPP to combat police brutality, racial profiling, and systemic racism. Touching on the quality of service and equality that she has experienced with SPS, Campbell asked, ?What can the OPP offer me as a visible minority and mother of two black boys, because statistics have shown that we are usually more likely to be racially profiled.?

?The OPP is committed to ensuring our organization is a progressive place and organization in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion,? said Sgt. Kee.

Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson, early in the question period broached the question of whether the OPP would be prepared to create a program to bridge the gap re-establish a trust factor visible minorities.

?Absolutely we would be supportive of that,? said Kee in response.

Shelburne Town council now has six month to make a decision on whether to transition to OPP or continue with Shelburne Police. If Shelburne accepts the OPP costing, they could transition to the provincial force as early as February 2021.