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Town of Shelburne to disband several council committees in 2026, with transition to staff-led projects

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Town of Shelburne is set to dissolve four existing Committees of Council at the start of 2026, marking a significant shift in how the municipality engages with volunteers and organizes community operations.

The move will see the end of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee, the Canada Day Festival Committee, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, and the Economic Development Committee.

In their place, the town has decided to design a new volunteer framework next year aimed at maintaining community involvement while reducing administrative strain.

The town identified a number of issues impacting these committees for some time. The biggest issue is engagement. Throughout 2024 and 2025, several of these committees held no meetings. In some cases, even when meetings were called, members failed to attend, leading to the meetings being cancelled.

The town said that this decline in participation and failure to maintain quorum has hindered the roles the committees were supposed to be advancing. The less they were able to meet, the less work could be done on relevant or time-sensitive issues. A lack of communication also led to delays and less frequent meetings.

This has led council to reevaluate the effectiveness and viability of these committees for the town.

Going forward, the Town of Shelburne plans to transfer the responsibility of some of these committees to town staff, rather than volunteers. In recent years, the town said it now has greater capacity to plan and execute events in-house with its employees, without depending on volunteer committees.

The new framework, to be introduced in 2026, will be town-led, with volunteer opportunities offered in cooperation with town staff to deliver events such as the Santa Claus parade. The town said that without an official committee, this approach will offer the town greater flexibility to plan and deliver events, while still providing volunteering opportunities to keep residents involved in town affairs.

This change is not without precedent, and nearby communities have also made similar moves. The Town of Orangeville disbanded its own DEI committee in favour of working within county-led initiatives. The County of Dufferin also moved to a staff-led Equity Working Group.

The staff report to council noted that the dissolving of the various committees was not a criticism of volunteers in any capacity. The report recognized that volunteers often have busy lives outside the committees and that schedules can conflict. This change is simply a focus on streamlining services delivered to the town.

Council expressed their continued gratitude for the work volunteers have contributed to the town and continue to contribute.

This change is also not expected to significantly impact the budget or taxes when it takes effect next year.