

Decision should be an easy one

By Tabitha Wells

One needn't look very far to see the overwhelming amount of support locally to keep the Orangeville Police Service rather than making a switch to OPP. As has been stated time and time again during this fairly unnecessary debate, this decision cannot be made based on dollars and cents. Especially when those dollars and cents are not firm numbers.

There is no guarantee or promise we will ever actually see the projected \$4.5 million in annual savings. If anything, there are more stories emerging from municipality after municipality of rates skyrocketing well above what was projected, leaving communities faced with egregious policing bills burdening their taxpayers.

What happens when, like many other communities now fighting to get rid of OPP, those savings not only doesn't appear, but turn out to be an unaffordable expense? The sheer fact that Orillia, the city where the main OPP buildings are located has been engaged in a four-year-long fight to get rid of them should be enough to raise some eyebrows.

We don't have the luxury of some mild trial period where if we feel they're not working out or the costs are too high we can back out. Once we have OPP, we won't be able to get back OPS.

If the reasoning for wanting OPP is to regain 'control' over the police budget (something Chief Kalinski has already done), handing over the reigns to the Province removes any say we might have in spending.

I mean, if you really think the province has our best financial interests in mind, great. But I'd say the hydro fiasco, amidst many other issues, is probably a good indication the provincial Liberals couldn't care less about the impact of their decisions on the lowly taxpayer. Provincial oversight has rarely worked in favour of smaller communities.

And let's be real here, even *if* we save \$4.5 million, the residents will never see a dime of it. Orangeville's taxes are always at a steady increase, and it's not because of the police budget. It's because cuts are not made where they could be made. Regardless of whether we are with OPP or OPS, the police budget will remain the highest part of Orangeville's budget.

More recently, I've noticed a number of people on social media declaring we need OPP because they strongly dislike our local officers. Have you forgotten already that it will be the same officers, just under a different banner? The argument of 'well they have to be in good-standing, so there!' falls short, because what is 'good-standing' to the OPP is certainly not the same as what someone who dislikes an officer for being a 'jerk' would be.

Getting rid of OPS will not 'get rid of' the officers here? they would still be the same police, so if the issue is with the officers themselves, going to OPP will not change anything. Yes, there may be an officer who won't get accepted by OPP, there may even be an officer or two who would apply for relocation, but there's no guarantee you won't end up with the exact same force.

Besides, expecting that changing the overhead will 'magically' change the officers would be as silly as saying that Burger King taking over Tim Hortons would magically solve any service issues the staff had. It's still the same staff, so if that one girl never gets your coffee order right? guess what, it still won't be right!

Also, let's address the giant elephant in the room, shall we? Deciding to make the switch to OPP while Chief Kalinski is in the middle of rebuilding and reshaping OPS is essentially giving him the finger and telling him that his work is worthless. Quite frankly, you cannot say that you are grateful for the incredible turnaround this man has created while in the same breath refusing to give him the opportunity to finish.

If that's acceptable, then we should be allowed to fire our council midway through the term, because they haven't managed to fully resolve the issues of the previous council in just a few years.

'Hey, you're cleaning up the mess, but we don't like the mess that was there before, so you're done. We're holding you responsible for your predecessors.'

If we're being realistic here, overall, this term of council has not been a positive one. While there are some exemplary members who have fought their hardest to stand for the interests of their electorate, others have been unable to get along, cooperate, or put the town's needs above their own personal interests.

If there is one, just one, good thing you do during your term, let it be to lay this debate to rest and allow Chief Kalinski to continue pushing the Orangeville Police into a positive and successful service. If there is one, one thing, you do that represents your electorate and not your own interests, let it be this:

Keep the Orangeville Police Service.

Remember, if things go to the crapper after the Chief leaves, the OPP will be there. If you go OPP and things go down the toilet, OPS are gone.

Is that a burden you're really ready to force onto the taxpayers?