

Orangeville Police Service vs Ontario Provincial Police

Mayor and Members of Council, I usually do not find it necessary to communicate with Council but the latest decision of Council surprised me so much that I felt it was necessary to send you my opinion and perception of what Council did or didn't do regarding the decision on whether to continue with an expensive police service or go with a reasonable alternative that is a known professional service at a massive cost savings.

A few things I would like to point out first as this communication is copied to the papers. I am hoping they may publish it as the public should be aware of some of these facts when putting my comments in perspective.

The Town of Orangeville has amongst, if not the highest tax rate in comparison to all other municipalities in Ontario. Orangeville Taxes have almost doubled since I moved here in 2005

The Town's debt is close to the legislative limit and is a huge problem for current and future generations to deal with

The Town's infrastructure debt, for things like sewer, water (especially water), roads, fire halls, etc. is massive and in my opinion is unmanageable without tax increases so large that we can expect our taxes to increase out of control.

The Town's reserve fund is completely inadequate

The financial outlook for this town is very poor, with a very low industrial tax base that is well below the recommend split between residential and industrial ratios. And, there is no ability to grow the industrial tax base due to boundary constraints.

I suspect that Councillors are well aware of these facts (or at least should be) and they are gloomy facts indeed. There is no magic bullet for the financial issues the Town currently has to manage and now the future is looking even worse. The Green Belt Legislation has capped the Town's physical boundaries, therefore there is no ability to grow the badly needed industrial tax base and this finite boundary is likely to exist forever. The lack of industrial tax base is partly the reason for the financial woes facing this little town but its not only that. In my opinion, bad political decisions are also a major contributor towards the bleak financial situation this town is in. The latest decision of Council regarding Orangeville Police Services is a perfect example of bad political decisions that will result in lasting negative financial impact on us and future generations. This poor political leadership is simply, incomprehensible.

I can understand the emotional attachment of having a local police department and if it were at around a 10% premium then I would say that yes it is a decision that Council needs to weigh in on and the decision would be a tough one to make. BUT, at approximately 100% premium, it is absolutely insane that the OPP's proposal was not voted in unanimously and with open arms.

What makes this ludicrous decision even more disturbing is, that the Councillors who voted to retain OPS did not make it conditional upon rolling back the costs of policing or even putting that question forward to the police chief as to why their costs are double of OPP. Why is there such a huge variance in the costs? I can't comprehend how there can be such a huge discrepancy in providing a basic service. I understand we have agreed to pay the police officers amongst the highest in the country, why I can't understand, but the politicians of today and the past did agree to do that. I understand that the civilian staff needed to support the policing is significantly different between the two services, OPS seems to be quite heavy in administrative support in comparison to OPP. However, there has to be a lot more behind this to equal double the cost. Why has no one on council asked the question of the Police Chief, can he bring his department within 10% of the OPP's costs or better? If he can't then get a police chief who can.

I would hope that at a minimum, any future contract negotiations with the Police Federation demand that the salaries be brought into line with small town policing and OPP's salary grid be used as a measure. I for one would support red lining salaries until their salaries are more representative of what a town with almost no industrial tax base and only 30,000 people, can afford. I was shocked to see how many Orangeville police were on the Sunshine List (those government employees that make over \$100,000 per year). By my count 23 officers earn over \$100,000 per year, with 1st class officers earning around \$105,000 going up to positions earning almost \$140,000, plus the police chief. And these are not professional positions where people spend thousands of dollars and years of their lives studying to get into these positions. I realize they are positions that have challenges and risks but some of them are paid more than a professional engineer is with the Town. This is not big city policing and the dangers are not as abundant as they are to south of us.

I heard a lot of 'please support the OPS?' during the deliberations but at no time did I hear from the service board members or the Chief of Police or the Federation (Police Union) saying that if we, the people, supported them to remain as our police services, that they pledged to bring their costs under control and will look at how OPP are so efficient in comparison and how they plan to be just

as efficient or even more efficient.

I can reasonably say that 99% of the citizens would not know the difference between OPP and OPS on our daily lives, other than the colour of the cars that drive around our town. Well, I must admit we'd miss the \$50,000 motorcycle the OPS recently bought.

The Town of Caledon, our municipal neighbour to the south, has OPP as their policing provider and Caledon was recently determined to be the safest place in Canada, so now tell me again why OPP is not a reasonable alternative?

It was obvious the Mayor had a bias on this issue way back when the question was raised whether to get OPP to provide a quote. I thought he ran on the platform to control taxes and for no tax increases? Were we ever sold a lie from that guy eh! Why was he not even willing to hear what the OPP's proposal was? why were you so obviously bias Mr. Mayor?

Councillor Campbell, had said she completely supported the OPS right from the onset. What happened to elected officials hearing the evidence, weighing them and making an informed and unbiased decision? How does a councillor make a decision before she has all the facts? If you can't listen with an open mind and be able to make an educated decision based on the facts, then you have no business representing the people.

Councillor Garisto, wants this issue to be presented as a referendum in the next election and Deputy Mayor Maycock was quoted as saying he thinks this will be an issue for 2018 municipal election. He also was quoted as saying there is no cost saving by delaying this decision until then.

First of all, we elect and pay councillors to make informed and educated decisions for us; we, the public, do not want to have to educate ourselves on the business of the Town, that is what your job is as paid elected officials. So passing the buck to say we, the public, will make the decision on this matter, come the next election means, everyone who votes should take the time to understand the financial implications, the service level implications and all other associated impacts on a decision as large as policing for the Town. I don't think so.

Secondly, there is a cost savings by implementing OPP now rather than deferring to 2018 election. It was stated there will be a \$350,000 savings in 2018 alone and an estimated overall savings of \$23 million by 2025. \$23 Million would basically eliminate the Town's debt.

Deputy Mayor Maycock, \$350,000 may not sound like much of a savings to you but when the next budget deliberations come around and you need several hundred thousand dollars to support a public works project or to refurbish something in Tony Rose Arena, or contribute to the reserve fund, then you better not support a tax increase to pay for that when you could have had the money in hand, if you had made the decision now. When will politicians realize they can't keep going to the well and keep raising taxes. We Canadians now pay more than 50% taxes and the tax free day is now June 7. We are not getting good value for our tax dollars as Canadians and politicians need to start using the existing funding more diligently rather than thinking they can just keep going back to the proverbial trough and endlessly increase taxes.

This complete lack of fiscal responsibility of the 4 councillors, (Williams, Maycock, Garisto, Campbell) who voted to retain OPS with no conditions, is simply unforgivable. Also, I don't think the other 3 councillors aren't without blame too. This issue was probably the largest issue that has faced the Council of this Town in decades and I don't believe they did their job to lobby the other councillors better and to bring this significant financial decision to more of the forefront. I never heard once from any of the elected officials on this issue or any other issue for that matter, ever. If it weren't for the newspapers, we would never know what goes on within the Town Hall.

I have never seen a news letter from any elected official, I have never been contacted from any of Council after they were elected, they just disappear into their chambers once a month and from what I read in the newspaper, they act completely unprofessionally. The Mayor's leadership style just does not fit in with this council, or probably any council for that matter, and Council has been completely ineffective from the onset. You are right about one thing Deputy Mayor Maycock, this will defiantly be an issue to remember come Oct 27, 2018.

I ask all my fellow citizens, to remember every time they sign that outrageously big cheque to pay the money pit we call the Town of Orangeville, that the number didn't have to be that big if we had politicians who cared. I was also amazed that one of the options the potential savings from a gift of \$4.5 million a year that OPP would have brought us, was to reduce taxes. Paying of debt, building reserves are all fine ideas, but when we are already the highest taxed peoples in Ontario, why was reducing the taxes not an option to mention?

Thank you,

C. A. Campbell