

Sergeant Doug Fry, President, Orangeville Police Association

Presentation to Orangeville Town Council, April 3, 2017

Good evening, Mayor Williams and members of council.

I have asked to speak to you tonight as a representative of the many long serving, dedicated men and women of the Orangeville Police Service. My name is Doug Fry. I am the President of the Orangeville Police Association and a Sgt. with the Orangeville Police and have been an officer here for 20 years. Previous to that I was with the OPP for 21 years policing the surrounding townships in Dufferin County.

The last time we found it necessary to speak at a council meeting was in August of 2014. At that time, our then President publicly questioned whether the service was being run in a fiscally responsible manner, and we highlighted the absence of any real leadership. Since this time we have worked diligently to forge strong partnerships and have been strengthening our relationships in order to continue to enhance our service.

Tonight, we are standing before you again to highlight the progress OPS has made. OPS has transformed into a service which came in well under budget last year and has had a zero increase in their budget over the last three years. Labour relations between the Service, the Board and the Association have greatly increased making for a more favourable work environment. Morale is the highest we've ever seen it. Our members are finally properly equipped. Our residents are receiving the high quality of service they deserve.

Many municipalities are requesting OPP costings. Many municipalities are exploring options other than the OPP. One only has to search "OPP price increases" on google to see numerous articles on how upset some municipalities are with how this new funding model is affecting their budgets. I'm not here to speak ill of the OPP. They are a great organization. They employ many great women and men who have the same qualifications as we do and are paid the same salaries as us. The only difference between us will be the type of policing provided and the cost.

I urge you to consider the implications of choosing to be the first to sign under this new model. Is it prudent to trust their new costing model that is unproven? It does not offer cost certainty. It features a "cost per call for service." That means that all of the perks that our residents currently enjoy, could potentially cost more money. Will our BIA see officers on foot patrol as much? Will residents have police attending noise complaints? Will our youth see police in their schools? Will our residents have the Commissioner of the OPP attending community functions? Will our town have a police service that is community focused like OPS? Those questions none of us can answer right now.

We strongly urge council to abandon the OPP costing for now and allow the Orangeville Police Service a chance to expand similar to what Lindsay/Kawartha Lakes and Peterborough Police have done by providing policing services to surrounding townships at a cheaper price than the OPP and expanding their services for more efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Other townships came to our police service for pricing as they felt they were not getting the service they deserved from the OPP for the cost being charged.

Providing policing for other townships would mean that the OPS would have another revenue stream and provide opportunities for policing services to other communities within Dufferin County. The economies of scale mean that the OPS would have an opportunity to provide more services, at a cheaper cost per household.

The Orangeville Police Service also has the opportunity, which the OPP do not have, to generate income by providing outside services like record checks and increased dispatch services to other fire and police services thereby decreasing the cost of policing for the residents of Orangeville.

As we said earlier, the new funding model is unproven. There is no certainty with it. The OPP will still be able to do a costing down the road, and council will be in a much better position to evaluate its options after it has had the opportunity to see how the model has worked out in other municipalities.

Let other communities be the testing ground for the OPP. The only certain thing I see is that if council decides to go with the OPP, we will have lost an opportunity to potentially grow our service as surrounding townships will be forced into OPP contracts and the opportunity to provide services to them would be gone.

I would respectfully submit that our community has everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by standing down, at least for a while, and turning down the OPP proposal.

The Liberal Government who controls the OPP has shown they are incapable of giving assurances on future pricing or cost for anything - Orange ambulance service, Gas plant in Oakville, and present cost of hydro.

For example did you know that none of the Orangeville Police Service civilian members are guaranteed jobs? 27 civilian members will have the opportunity to "APPLY" for a job with the OPP. The OPP presentation stated that they will need 10 civilian employees for the town but that our members will have to apply for those jobs and there is no guarantee of anyone of our current civilian employees getting a job in the town. There is also uncertainty if all officers will be taken by the OPP. Our communicators if hired by the OPP would only be offered part time contract jobs in Orillia with no benefits or seniority.

If council chooses to disband the Orangeville Police Service essentially not only these 27 members will be affected but also their families, affecting more than 100 people who work and live in this community. Most of these members would be forced to sell their homes due to lack of employment. Most of our civilian members have dedicated their lives to the Orangeville Police Service having between 15-25 years of service.

We ask that council take into consideration the impact that their decision is going to have on our members and their families.

QUESTIONS

1. Do the OPP stand behind the numbers that the Town staff are presenting here tonight? That they can cut the costs of policing in Orangeville in half over three years. Police wages and benefits for 42 personnel allotted to police Orangeville by either the OPP or OPS are over the total cost of policing submitted by the OPP-doesn't make sense-is the province picking up the rest of the tab.
2. Will the residents of Orangeville see the anticipated reduction in costs for police services reflected in their property taxes or will their taxes stay the same?
3. Will the citizens of Orangeville have a vote on any changes in policing or will that decision be made solely by this council.
4. Policing prices never go down and don't fluctuate like gas prices depending on demand for the product.

****An old saying is if it sounds too good to be true it probably is.****

If the projected costs of policing presented by the Town staff tonight seem too good to be true they probably are.

Let's not kid ourselves. Policing is expensive in Orangeville and in any community policed by the OPP or any other municipal or regional police service. Nobody is getting a deal and nobody's police bill is ever low enough. It's that emergency service that we hope to never have to use and when we do, we want every available resource put into action to help us. That luxury comes at a cost and is part of the civilized world. Orangeville has enjoyed community policing for more than a century and there is little evidence to suggest that we will be better off by fixing something that isn't broken.

The premise of seeking a cheaper solution in the OPP over our own local police service makes as much sense as asking Mercedes-Benz to quote on replacing town fleet vehicles. The OPP is contractually obligated by their police union to be the highest paid police officers in the Province. Looking to abandon a local police service that seems to be running well and serving the community is a fool's errand when you look at the costs of shutting down the operation, paying off the employees with severance and termination bonuses as well as the costs of upgrading a 10 yr. old building to OPP standards to house the OPP and other costs that will come out in the exercise.

Would it not be in the best interest of Council to concentrate their efforts on getting more industry to come to Orangeville to firm up our tax base and lower residential taxes than to nickel and dime police services.