

Section 10 Seminar 2012 – Panel Questions - Friday 0830-0930

Title: Section 10 Contracts, Costs & Governance

Moderator: Henry Jensen, President OAPSB

Panelists:

- Mayor John Lessif, Town of Tillsonburg, Mayors' Coalition
- Mayor Gary McNamara, Past President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- Fred Kaustinen, Executive Director, OAPSB

1. In your opinion, what are the main issues regarding OPP municipal policing today?

My opinion, and along with 80 other municipalities who have signed up in support of the Mayors' Coalition for Accessible, Sustainable Accountable Police costing for small urban/rural municipalities being serviced by the OPP is this:

First to begin we all agree the delivery of service provided by the OPP in our communities has been and is excellent. We and is of a high standard of level of safety we have in Tillsonburg and throughout the Province. So the question becomes, can we maintain this standard while addressing the unsustainable cost of it... I think we can.

Issue # one

The service is a Provincial service that Municipalities are asked to pay for thru their municipal budgets. Yet we have no way of achieving accountability back to the local tax payers we are collecting money from for the of the province's model.

It is time for this needs to change. Council's of the day have a legal and moral responsibility to the tax payer to take accountability for the dollars we are entrusted with.

We, the elected municipal leaders play too trivial role in the establishing of the policing delivery model and the control of how out money is spent on critical cost factors such as escalating labour costs. OPP budgets for some municipalities are as high as 50% of the operating budget. In Tillsonburg it is 28 % of a 12 million dollar operating budget. In 2014, Premier McGuinty has committed to a 8.5% wage increase, which will move the costs to 30%.

Since taking office in Dec 2010, Tillsonburg will have had a \$850,000 increase in the OPP policing costs. This does include a contract renewal currently under discussion. This increase represents a 7% hit on the tax levy.

The result: much needed infrastructure projects being delayed.

Projects to build community facilities also being delayed.

This is not sustainable. It is not affordable and it does not allow for us to be accountable as elected officials.

Municipalities must have “say for pay”.

Issue Two:

If the Province wants to continue to have control of the pay, the policing model, then take the burden off the municipalities of writing the cheque with no say as to how the dollars are spent.

The current structure of assessing municipalities on the current model has resulted in an imbalance of police service costs across the Province. We see municipalities paying anywhere from \$9 to \$1000.00 per capita for their policing. It is time for Fairness.

The Ministry assured the Coalition in August 2011 this issue would get addressed in time for the 2012 budget process. The new Minister made the same commitment at Good Roads/AMO in February. It's time. Many municipalities will be starting the budget process next month.

The Minister has acknowledged the issue. To her credit she has reached out and invited the stakeholders thru their staff to offer solutions. The OPP have acknowledged the present model is not sustainable and have brought forward their recommendation for the Ministry to consider.

The Mayors' Coalition is optimistic changes will come.

The issue is: will the Minister take full responsibility for OPP policing costs and bring fairness by uploading and how soon?

We are told the total bill for OPP policing in the Province is over three billion dollars with Municipalities paying one third of the overall costs. The number keeps growing out pacing inflation by 8%. Not affordable-Not sustainable.

The Mayors Coalition is asking the Government to upload the OPP costs and take it off the backs of the Municipalities. The load is too heavy.

It is the Ministry who establishes Policing Policy thru legislation and it is the Ministry who decides salaries and benefit increases which is 85% of the overall costs.

This is not sustainable. It is not affordable. It does not allow for elected officials to be accountable back to their constituents. It is not a partnership

What is your vision for contract policing?

The vision of the Mayor's Coalition is for Municipalities being serviced by OPP with Section 10 OPP contracts is one where Municipalities continue to maintain the level of service delivered by the OPP at an affordable, sustainable and accountable cost.

What are the barriers to your vision, and how will you overcome them?

The first barrier is not having a functional and accountable partnership with the Provincial Government. Municipal Councils have a legal obligation as elected officials to be accountable for all expenditures in operating budgets of their respect communities. Currently this is impossible as the Police Act prevents Municipalities from having any say in police costing or deployment of services. Yet Municipalities are asked to pay the invoices and accept the wage and benefit increases determined by the Government.

Overcoming this dysfunctional and unsustainable arrangement the Ministry, must show vision and will to work with the municipalities in reforming policy and legislation to allow for a true partnership with the locals being served.

We are seeking a desire by the Province to evolve the partnership along with us, if this is not possible, then take 100% of the costs off the Municipal levy. In this case there is simply no role for the municipality

One of the barriers to this is the typical political struggle with evolving policy and making some difficult challenging choices around this. However, if we all are to truly represent the people both receiving and paying for this service; we owe it to them to find the courage and comfort to embrace this evolution and come together to make it happen.

Remember 85% of the invoice is wages and benefits. Continuation of wage adjustments 5.5% in 2011, no say on that one- another 8.5% increase promised in 2014, with no say.

The Government has stated OPP will be the highest paid police force in Ontario, no say with that one.

If having no say, is not a barrier to turning the vision into reality, what is?

Accept the Mayor's Coalition invitation to be real partners or remove the collection of payment from the municipal levy and collect for this Provincial service directly.

The next barrier I'll speak to is the issue of fairness. It is time to recognize policing need to be in the same arena as health care and education. We all pay the same.

Based on per capita bases this would result in a more equitable distribution of the burden of service as opposed to the wildly diverging distribution of this current model. The Minister has concerns any change will result in winners and losers. I suggest, there are winners and losers with the current arrangement

This would go a long way in turning the Mayor's Coalition from a vision to a reality.

To finish, if the Minister's supports this distribution model we look forward to working with her on the details. The financial barrier is not complicated. The solution has been figured out. Move on this part now, the Ministry then can focus the energies of the stakeholders to address the more challenging issues around reform.

The single most effective solution is for all the moving parts of this is to recognize that we all represent the constituents at the end of the day and their expectations is that we are ALL working collaboratively on solutions.

The Mayor's Coalition (www.mayorscoalition.com) has worked hard to build partnerships and continues to bring more players to the tent.

We are committed to constructively finding solutions to evolve the service Ontarions receive.

Affordable – Sustainable – Accountable Policing –ASAP

We ask for your support as a minimum and financial support of \$1000 is most welcomed.

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