

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Barrie City Council, the Police Services Board and the residents of Barrie acknowledge that the City is being well served by the men and women of the Barrie Police Service. They also appreciate the on-going commitment and significant contribution of the members of the Barrie Police Service toward ensuring the safety of the citizens of Barrie.

In planning for the future, City Council and the Barrie Police Services Board recognize that the City of Barrie is a rapidly growing community and that the service demands and pressures of on-going growth will create the need for increased policing services.

In a desire to pro-actively consider all options in planning to meet Barrie's policing needs in the future, City Council requested that the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services provide a costing for the provision of police services in Barrie by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). On January 19, 1998, representatives from the OPP presented a proposal for the provision of policing services for the City of Barrie.

On January 26, 1998, after reviewing the OPP proposal, City Council formed a Police Service Review Committee to co-ordinate the review of the OPP proposal and other related matters. The primary goal of the review process was to identify the service delivery organization that provides the most accountable, responsive, effective and cost-efficient policing for the citizens of the City of Barrie within the fiscal resources of the community.

The main question in this review has been whether there is an opportunity to build upon the strengths and strong traditions of the Barrie Police Service by merging it with the Ontario Provincial Police to meet the needs of a rapidly growing community in the future. The evaluation criteria adopted by the Committee for evaluating policing options included a review of governance, community policing, levels of service, staff deployment, cost comparisons, long-term financial implications and impact on staff and the community.

After extensive review and community consultation, the Committee has concluded that the merger of the Barrie Police Service with the Ontario Provincial Police represents the best alternative for policing in the City of Barrie.

An amalgamation of the OPP and the Barrie Police Service incorporates the strengths, and virtually none of the weaknesses of the respective services. The City of Barrie and the Barrie Police Services Board will, therefore, be able to ensure that there will be an increased front-line police presence in the community at a reduced cost of approximately \$1 million - *without a meaningful loss of local control.*

The City of Barrie is the nation's fastest growing community. It is vitally important that steps be taken now, to plan for the future. The proposal by the OPP outlines that there can be immediate cost-savings for the community and potential for greater cost containment in the future. By moving to a contract with the OPP, the residents of Barrie will have access to the vast resources of the OPP.

In the OPP's proposal, many of the administrative and specialty functions presently carried out by senior staff of the Barrie Police Service will be handled by staff at the Regional Headquarters. As a result, the OPP is able to provide more sworn officers on the front-line to serve the residents of Barrie.

As an example, the OPP is able to guarantee for uniform patrol that a minimum of 10 front-line officers will be on duty per shift. This is more than 60% higher than the level of service that can be provided by the Barrie Police Service within its current Budget allocation. In essence this means a greater police presence on the streets of Barrie at any given time.

A decision to merge with the OPP means that the citizens of Barrie will realize significant savings while being able to provide an enhanced level of policing services for the community. By joining with the OPP, the City's current uniform staff will continue to police the City and the local Police Services Board retains control of police services and is able to ensure that local priorities are met.

It has been noted several times during the review that criminals do not pay attention to municipal boundaries. By using the OPP to provide services in a large area which includes the City of Barrie, there can be better co-ordination and more efficient response to police calls.

By working in partnership with the OPP, the Barrie Police Services Board will ensure that the policing initiatives that are undertaken in the city truly reflect the needs of the community. Through its work, the Review Committee has concluded that this is not a choice between two police services. Rather, it is a decision to develop a police service for an extremely fast-growing city that incorporates the best aspects of both organizations.

Recommendation

After conducting an extensive review, the Police Service Review Committee unanimously recommends:

1. **That, to ensure the delivery of high quality police services at the most reasonable cost to the citizens of Barrie, the Barrie Police Service be merged with the Ontario Provincial Police and the proposal for the provision of police services for the City of Barrie as prepared by the First Nations and Municipal Policing Bureau of the Ontario Provincial Police be accepted in principle.**
2. **That, in accordance with Section 10 of the Police Services Act, the City of Barrie notify the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services of its desire to negotiate an agreement for the provision of police services in the City of Barrie by the Ontario Provincial Police.**
3. **That the Barrie Police Services Board be requested to endorse this Resolution.**

If one is satisfied to approach this issue at a superficial level, the process is divisive. If, on the other hand, one invests the time and, thereby, acquires a greater depth of understanding, the perspective that develops tends to focus on the enhancement of strengths with an amalgamated service and the elimination of weaknesses.

Ultimately, a decision will be made and the professionalism of the Barrie Police Service and the Ontario Provincial Police, both before and after the decision, will go a long way towards determining whether the correct decision was indeed rendered.