

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Tim Simmonds, City Manager
Meeting Date: September 14, 2026
Report Code: CM-26-030
Subject: Update: Information and Requirements Related to an OPP Costing Request

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-26-030 respecting information and requirements related to an OPP costing request, City Council refers the report to the Resilient Community Advisory Committee in 2027.

Highlights:

- Council has not directed staff to pursue OPP policing or obtain an OPP costing. The current work is focused solely on understanding the process and requirements should a future Council wish to explore the option.
- Council's interest is understanding the long-term financial sustainability of policing costs, while continuing to recognize and support the quality of service provided by the Owen Sound Police Service.
- The Solicitor General encouraged Council to fully understand both the costs and revenues associated with the current policing model before considering any future options. The Ministry was receptive to the City's request, although a formal response may take several months.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Safe City – Contributing to inclusivity and accessibility in our community and participating in initiatives focused on a range of long-term, systemic safety solutions that respond to current and future residents.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Report CR-26-071 from the Manager of Corporate Services Re: Owen Sound Police Service Facility Needs Assessment](#)

At the July 27, 2026 Council meeting, Council passed Resolution No. R-260727-009 as follows:

“THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-26-071 respecting a facility needs assessment for the Owen Sound Police Service building, City Council directs staff to bring forward a report in September 2026 outlining the steps required to obtain a costing estimate from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).”

Background:

Since 2022, the City of Owen Sound has undertaken a comprehensive corporate service review focused on improving efficiency, modernization, service sustainability, and transparency in the use of public resources. While many municipal service areas have been examined through this process, police services were not included.

In July 2026, Council received a report seeking approval to retain a consultant to complete a facility needs assessment for the Owen Sound Police Service (OSPS) building. During its discussion, Council broadened its focus beyond facility needs to include the long-term affordability and sustainability of policing services, recognizing that the municipality would remain responsible for police facilities regardless of the policing model. Council then adopted Resolution R-260727-009, directing staff to report back on the steps required to obtain a costing estimate from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP).

Council's direction was not intended to evaluate the quality or effectiveness of policing services currently provided by the OSPS. Instead, it reflected Council's continuing commitment to understanding the long-term financial

sustainability of major municipal services and ensuring that future decisions are supported by complete and objective information.

Analysis and Options:

Understanding the Process, Not Making a Decision

It is important to be clear at the outset that Council has not directed staff to obtain an OPP costing, nor has Council made any decision to pursue a change in policing service delivery. Rather, Council's July 27, 2026 resolution directed staff to better understand the process, requirements, timelines, and considerations involved should a future Council wish to request an OPP costing assessment. The purpose of this work is informational in nature and is intended to support informed decision-making.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General did not indicate that an OPP costing request would be unavailable to the City in the future and staff remain hopeful that more definitive responses to the questions submitted to the Ministry will be received. The City was advised, however, that while Ministry staff would begin reviewing the request, a formal response may take several months to prepare given the need for internal consultation and review.

A Constructive Discussion with the Province

During the 2026 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference in Ottawa, the Mayor, accompanied by City representatives, met face-to-face with the Solicitor General to discuss Council's resolution and the City's desire to better understand the steps associated with obtaining an OPP costing assessment. The discussion was open, positive, and constructive. The Mayor emphasized that Council's interest is not about criticizing or speaking negatively about the OSPs. Council recognizes and appreciates the professionalism, commitment, and important role that community policing provides within Owen Sound. Rather, the discussion focused on Council's responsibility to understand the long-term financial sustainability of all major municipal services and to ensure it has the information necessary to evaluate future options should it choose to do so. This aligns with the same principles that have guided the City's broader service review process.

The Conversation Is About Sustainability

The Mayor further noted that policing expenditures currently account for approximately 30 cents of every municipal tax dollar collected. When combined with fire services, public safety expenditures consume approximately 48 cents of every tax dollar, leaving approximately 52 cents to fund all other municipal services including roads, infrastructure, transit, recreation, parks, engineering, planning, public works, and corporate services.

Council's interest is therefore centered on affordability and long-term sustainability, rather than the quality of policing services currently being provided. This perspective is consistent with benchmarking information previously reviewed by Council through the BMA Annual Report, which identified policing costs in Owen Sound as being significantly higher than several comparable municipalities, including communities served by the OPP. One community, Collingwood, was used as an example in the discussion and represents a nearly \$3 million difference in costs for policing.

Understanding Both Costs and Revenues

During the discussion, the Solicitor General encouraged the City to continue engaging with the OSPS Board and noted that Council should have a comprehensive understanding of all financial aspects of the current policing model before considering any future options. In particular, the Solicitor General highlighted the importance of understanding the revenue-generating activities and cost recovery opportunities currently associated with the OSPS, including dispatch services, records management functions, and other services that may generate revenue or offset operating costs as these would not be offered by an OPP policing model.

Keeping Future Options on the Table

The Solicitor General noted that the OSPS currently provides dispatch and other services to a number of municipalities through contractual arrangements and referenced several of the municipalities that receive services through these agreements. The Solicitor General expressed the view that Council should have access to detailed information regarding these arrangements, including the overall net financial benefit associated with those services. The Solicitor General indicated that having a complete

understanding of both costs and revenues is important to any discussion about policing sustainability and future service delivery options.

As a result, the Solicitor General encouraged continued dialogue between the City and the OSPA Board so that Council can gain a more detailed understanding of how these revenue streams contribute to the financial position of the service and how those revenues may be affected under alternative policing delivery models. Such information would support a more complete analysis and help ensure that future Council discussions are informed by the full financial picture.

The Solicitor General also suggested that, in addition to understanding the OPP costing process, there may be value in revisiting broader regional policing discussions. Specifically, consideration could be given to opportunities involving neighbouring municipal police services, including West Grey and Hanover, to determine whether any form of regionalized policing model could present efficiencies, improved sustainability, or other service delivery benefits. While no specific recommendation was made, the discussion reinforced the importance of examining a range of options and gathering complete information before considering any significant changes to policing arrangements.

Next Steps and Continuing Dialogue

At the conclusion of the meeting, the City provided the Solicitor General with a briefing package outlining Council's resolution, relevant benchmarking information, and a series of questions intended to help Council better understand the requirements associated with a future OPP costing request (see attachment).

The City specifically requested guidance via these five questions:

- What are the formal steps required for a municipality currently served by a municipal police service to obtain an OPP costing assessment;
- What is the data, documentation, Council resolutions, Police Service Board engagement, and background studies typically required before such a review would be undertaken;
- What are the opportunities for consultation with the municipality, Police Service Board, police leadership, Council, and community stakeholders throughout the process;

- Expected timelines and key decision points from an initial inquiry through to completion of a costing assessment; and
- Examples or best practices from Ontario municipalities that have explored or completed a similar review.

These questions were intentionally designed to provide Council with a clear understanding of the procedural, governance, consultation, and decision-making requirements associated with any future consideration of an OPP costing assessment before determining whether any further action is warranted.

Given that the Ministry's eventual response may provide important information regarding process requirements, stakeholder engagement expectations, timelines, alternatives considered by other municipalities, and potential next steps available to Council, staff believe that any future response should be reviewed in detail before further decisions are contemplated. As such, staff recommend that this report and any future correspondence received from the Ministry be referred to the Resilient Community Advisory Committee for consideration. This approach will provide an opportunity for public discussion and input while allowing the Committee to review the information and provide recommendations to Council respecting long-term policing sustainability, service delivery considerations, and any future actions that may be appropriate. Overall, staff view the meeting as positive and constructive. The City's request was well received, Council's intentions were clearly understood, and the Ministry appeared supportive of providing additional information to help inform future discussions. While the City had hoped to receive responses to the questions submitted in the coming weeks, representatives from the Solicitor General's Office advised that a formal response may be several months away. Staff will continue to maintain contact with Ministry officials and will report back to Council as additional information becomes available. At this time, the Ministry has not indicated that an OPP costing request would be unavailable to Owen Sound in the future. Staff remain optimistic that the information ultimately provided will help Council better understand the process, requirements, timelines, and considerations associated with any future request for an OPP costing assessment.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

There were no direct costs associated with this report.

Human Resources

Approximately four hours of time were required by the City Manager in preparation of this report, which includes time with the Ministry of the Solicitor General at the AMO Conference.

Time and Scheduling

This matter was not included in the City's annual workplan and arose from a specific Council resolution adopted on July 27, 2026. As a result, the work has been accommodated within existing staff resources and alongside other corporate priorities.

At this stage, there are no critical project milestones or decision deadlines associated with the initiative. Council has not directed staff to pursue an OPP costing assessment; rather, Council has requested information regarding the process, requirements, timelines, and considerations should a future Council wish to explore that option.

The timeline is largely dependent on the Ministry of the Solicitor General's response to the City's questions. While the City had hoped to receive information in the coming weeks, Ministry representatives advised that a formal response may take several months due to internal review and consultation requirements. Any delay in receiving this information is not expected to impact other municipal initiatives, as no subsequent decisions or actions are currently scheduled or contingent upon the Ministry's response.

Staff will continue to monitor progress and report back to Council as additional information becomes available.

Technology and Infrastructure

No infrastructure or technology impacts have been identified at this stage. The current work is limited to information gathering and does not require new software, hardware, facilities, or external vendor services. Any future implications would be evaluated and reported should Council decide to pursue additional review or analysis.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Communication and Engagement:

Given that the City is awaiting further guidance from the Ministry of the Solicitor General, no additional communication or engagement activities are anticipated at this time. Any future communication strategy will be developed based on information received and Council direction.

Report Developed in Consultation With:

N/A.

Attachments:

OPP Costing Information Distributed at AMO August 17, 2026 to Solicitor General and staff in attendance

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Tim Simmonds, City Manager at tsimmonds@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1210.