

Council approves five per cent Caledon OPP Budget increase

Caledon OPP Detachment Commander provides update on police work in Caledon

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Caledon will spend more on policing next year.

At Caledon Council's October 10 General Committee meeting, the Caledon OPP's 2024 Budget was tabled.

The police force's budget next year is \$14.25 million, an increase of about \$700,000 from this year.

That equals an approximate budget increase of 5.3 per cent, slightly more than the 3.78 per cent increase projected for 2024 in the 2023 Caledon OPP budget.

Caledon OPP Detachment Commander MaryLouise Kearns made a presentation on the 2024 Budget to Council alongside Caledon's CFO, David Sutton. The presentation also touched on various OPP statistics.

Kearns' presentation showed steadily rising calls for service in Caledon since 2019, with police expecting to receive over 36,000 calls by year's end. This is approximately 3,000 more calls than in 2022, and 12,000 more than in 2019.

Kearns said contract enhancements are being made for Caledon OPP's traffic unit, community response unit, mobile crisis response team, and community street crime unit.

She highlighted work Caledon OPP is doing to promote traffic safety, such as seat belt campaigns, commercial vehicle safety checks, RIDE programs, and increased patrols on long weekends.

"We take a very proactive stance on impaired driving with frequent RIDE programs throughout Caledon," said Kearns.

From January to July, Kearns said Caledon OPP dealt with 70 occurrences of impaired driving.

Kearns said Caledon OPP has been able to secure new technology like in-car cameras and automated license plate readers. She said the plate readers help find stolen vehicles and suspended drivers.

She said Caledon OPP have issued 1,278 more tickets in 2023 than they had by this time in 2022. Of those tickets, 175 have been for trucks using no-truck routes.

As of July, there have been seven fatal motor vehicle collisions in Caledon and 144 collisions that caused personal injury.

Kearns said Caledon has been piloting the use of detachment operation clerks, civilian employees who are hired to help officers with a variety of administrative tasks and get them back onto the road quicker.

Caledon OPP has also increased overtime shifts and hired two special constables that help with duties like collection of fingerprints and court administrative functions.

The increase in the 2024 Caledon OPP Budget is mainly in the OPP service contract due to increases in salaries and wages. The increase is also due in part to inflationary pressures on services the OPP contracts out like snow plowing and landscaping.

Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell said he'd like to see a staffing breakdown between 2019 and 2023.

"We see a lot of statistics from 2019 to 2023 about offenses, but we don't really have any sense of what's happened in terms of enforcement personnel during that time," said Maskell.

He asked if the Budget increase for 2024 meant Caledon OPP would be adding additional uninformed staff.

Kearns said it doesn't, and that Caledon police officers are busier than ever, going call to call.

"Every year, our calls are not only getting higher, but they are also getting more violent," said Kearns. "Our accidents are increasing because the sheer volume on our roads is unbelievable."

Kearns said Caledon OPP has enough officers to cover Caledon, and that for big events like Bolton's Midnight Madness, Caledon OPP call in extra officers from other jurisdictions to help.

Across Ontario, police agencies are trying to recruit more officers, she said.

Ward 4 Councillor Nick de Boer said he'd be supporting the Budget, and introduced an amendment providing funding for additional radar speed units for officers to use.

The Budget, with Councillor de Boer's amendment, was passed unanimously and will be recommended for adoption at Council's October 24 meeting.