

## Traffic issues are top priority being imparted to police

By Bill Rea

Caledon OPP is working on updating its business plan for the next three years, and issues involving traffic and enforcement are high on the list of priorities with the public.

Sergeant Mike Garant made the observation Tuesday night at the third of four public consultations being held on the issue. This session was in Bolton, and the final one will be this coming Tuesday (Jan. 28) at 7 p.m. at Southfields Village Public School at 110 Learmont Ave.

The last such consultation was conducted three years ago, and Garant told the audience at the Bolton session that the three top priorities at that time, of almost equal stress, were traffic enforcement and safety, crime prevention and community policing (visibility). But traffic issues have taken a commanding lead this year, he said; on an order of about 80 per cent.

‘It’s already on our radar as a top priority,’ he said.

Crime prevention and community policing have been raised at the other sessions, too, Garant added.

There were a couple of other priority issues raised in Bolton, including addressing Caledon’s former status as Canada’s safest community. Caledon was named that for several years in a row by Maclean’s Magazine, but lost that status in 2013.

‘Some of it is beyond our control,’ Garant observed.

The issue of response times was also raised.

Garant said calls are subject to priority. An emergency in progress will be responded to by officers using their lights and sirens, and driving as fast as they can, maintaining safety.

He added an emergency in Bolton will see an average response time of about four minutes, although he added it can sometimes take longer, if there’s a bad accident or some other emergency requiring their attention.

‘We do prioritize every call for service,’ he commented. ‘We take every call for service seriously.’

The Town is divided into zones, and Garant said if an officer is not responding to a call, that person is expected to be in their zone, presenting a visible presence.

Addressing issues of traffic enforcement, he said there are problem areas; places that are notorious for infractions. But Garant added they don’t have the resources to have a police cruiser parked in one area all the time just because people say there’s a lot of speeding or running of stop signs.

He said there was an area of Bolton where they had been getting a lot of complaints regarding stop signs. Garant said they assigned unmarked cars and officers on foot, and they were able to catch a lot of violations. He added about 90 per cent of the drivers they stopped lived within a kilometer of the problem intersection, and one of them had been one of the people who had been complaining. There had been concerns when the entire detachment moved into the new station on Innis Lake Road about a year ago, that the police presence would decrease. But Garant said the public feedback he’s been hearing has indicated the opposite.

The public has a role to play in traffic enforcement. Garant urged people who see an infraction to get a description of the vehicle (including the licence number, if possible) and report it. Even if they can’t get to the vehicle right away, the information may help form a pattern that can help them later.

He also said crime prevention is very important, again urging people to report anything suspicious they see in their area.

Again, there are things people can do to prevent being victims, such as making sure they lock their cars. Garant said would-be thieves will try to get into a car, and if they find it’s locked, they will move on in search of an unlocked one.

‘It’s not just a Caledon issue,’ he said. ‘It’s happening everywhere. The best way to avoid it is just lock that car.’