



## **The Business of Policing**

Last week, our Chamber was fortunate to host Chief Matt Torigian of the Waterloo Regional Police Service for a luncheon speaking engagement.

Chief Torigian was recently appointed to his current position following over twenty years of service with the force, most recently as Deputy Chief of Administration. He follows the distinguished career of Larry Gravill, who retired as the longest serving leader of a municipal force in Canada, a significant accomplishment given the demands and pressures of these positions.

Chief Torigian provided a brief perspective on the comparison of Waterloo Region to 27 other urban areas across Canada. Locally, we have the fourth lowest rates in both property crimes and violent crimes. In 2006, the overall reported criminal code rate declined by four per cent, which included improvements in cases solved and reduced personal injury collisions.

Also noted were the growing parallels in business practices between the police force and many private sector companies throughout Waterloo Region. Chief Torigian emphasized that his organization is developing a culture of planning through strategic plans, business and operational plans, activity plans, and meaningful annualized reporting.

A relatively new process assumed by the force is human resources planning. A proposal was recently submitted to the Police Services Board which represents the first Human Resources Strategic Plan developed by an Ontario police service. Based on a series of recent reports related to police recruiting, the strategy is very much warranted.

Chief Torigian noted that annual applications for constable positions currently total approximately 400 annually, compared with 2000 in past years. Compounding the drop in potential recruits is an escalating retirement rate that is generally prevalent in large forces across Ontario. In September of last year, the local force had twelve openings for constables, but could only fill ten positions.

The crusade for police recruits was elevated last November when representatives of the Calgary Police Service arrived in Toronto to attract skilled applicants. According to their news release, the Calgary service was facing a staffing shortage originating from retirements, attrition, and population growth. A previous practice of charging applicants a \$450 fee for testing has been waived and other modifications proposed to accelerate the application process. An annual target of 200 new recruits for the next two years is anticipated to complement the existing force of 1,600 officers.

The staffing shortage is also appearing prominently on the provincial and national policy agendas. Ontario Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services Rick Bartolucci recently called on the federal government to honour a funding commitment on the hiring of 2,500 new front-line police officers across Canada. The Ontario government has requested that the OPP receive one-half of the new Ontario allocation, with special considerations on northern and First Nations policing.

Karl Walsh, President of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, estimates the OPP is short between 350 and 500 officers. On a national level, there are approximately 195 police officers for every 100,000 Canadians, short of the levels obtained in the United States, Australia and Britain, which all have more than 220 officers per 100,000 residents.

Chief Torigian, like many senior public officials across Waterloo Region, will be facing a series of challenges as our population grows and competition for recruits intensifies. However, it appears the force is well positioned to move forward with the implementation of effective strategic planning processes, particularly in the human resources portfolio.

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