

Bancroft and Madoc OPP amalgamation not currently tabled, says OPP

By Jim Eadie

North Hastings has been abuzz with talk that the OPP is reviewing an amalgamation opportunity between its Bancroft and Madoc detachments, but a spokesperson for the OPP Eastern Regional Headquarters maintains amalgamation is 'not on the table.'

In a town press release that ran in *Bancroft This Week* last week, the town raised alarms about a regional review underway to determine if efficiencies and cost savings can be achieved by amalgamating the Madoc and Bancroft detachments. Other area media sources also identified that the detachments were being evaluated - though neither Centre Hastings' nor Bancroft's mayors had been consulted.

'We received no official notice,' said Mayor Paul Jenkins. 'We learned about this through the rumour mill. I am all for efficiencies as long as the amalgamation is headquartered out of Bancroft.' Subsequently, Hastings Highlands motioned to provide a letter of support for Bancroft at its Feb. 7 meeting.

'This was brought up at our Jan. 9 meeting,' said Wollaston Township Bancroft and Area Community Policing Advisory Committee representative and Councillor Bob Ireland. The committee is composed of municipal representatives and Bancroft OPP Detachment Cmdr. and Acting Staff Sgt. Jeff MacKinnon.

'It wasn't on the agenda, and was brought up as the meeting was wrapping up. MacKinnon said there was going to be an efficiency review, and he said it could involve joining Madoc and Bancroft. Both detachments would remain open. There would be a more senior commander level in Madoc as the primary detachment, but a reasonably senior person in Bancroft in charge here. How else is it going to work? I don't know.'

MacKinnon confirmed that this conversation occurred at the Jan. 9 meeting. He noted that efficiency reviews are necessary and regularly conducted, and at the present time they are just in the preliminary stages.

OPP Eastern Regional Headquarters spokesperson Acting Sgt. Tina Hunt spoke on behalf of Supt. Craig Abrams who is in charge of this particular file.

'[Abrams] told me to tell you that the municipalities have been notified of this review,' she said. 'It is in the very early stages, and we not looking at amalgamation at the present time. That is not on the table. We are in the very early stages where we look at operational considerations first, and municipalities would not be part of that process. Then we would bring our municipal partners to the table. In the end, there may be no efficiencies.'