

OPP clears Adjala-Tosorontio on retirement benefits extension

By **Richard Blanchard**

An Ontario Provincial Police investigation into the extension and improvement of the health benefits package for Adjala-Tosorontio township and council members has found no basis for the laying of criminal charges.

Adjala-Tosorontio council held a special in camera council meeting recently to discuss the report.

The OPP investigation followed a complaint made to the OPP by councillors Floyd Pinto and Bob Meadows last October about the extension of health benefits and the failure to inform and receive approval from council.

In its conclusion, the police report noted that:

'Investigators do not believe the evidence presented, and obtained, affords reasonable grounds that a criminal offence was committed. It is important to note this finding does not preclude an employer from making a finding that bylaw procedures were not followed and the record keeping (and retention of those records) was inadequate. While individual employees or perhaps individual members of Council could have been held accountable by the corporation for not following the direction set out in By-Law 94-44, there is no evidence anyone committed a criminal offence.'

The Township released press releases on the OPP report over several days recently, which noted that the report confirmed earlier findings by the OPP that there was no evidence of criminal activity.

Both press releases stated much of the problem was due to deficiencies in corporate policies and procedures in the past where one or more members of council and senior staff negotiated the health benefits package with the insurance carrier for the Township.

'There was consistency in information from the interviews that the designated members of Council involved in the negotiations keep the other members of council informed,' was noted in the report and emphasized in the press release signed by Mayor Small Brett Sept. 30.

She also noted that the extended health, along with other wage and compensation changes, were open for discussion during the annual budget workshops.

Small Brett said that the council was moving to ensure that the recommendations from the OPP of improving policies and procedures, improving record management and more direction from council

'I want to thank all of those who co-operated in this investigation. It is important that we continue to improve how things are done in an open and transparent way,' she wrote in the press release.

In an email, Councillor Floyd Pinto said that the report from the OPP had justified his and Meadows's concerns about the approval process for the employee benefits package.

'The attached OPP final report confirms all the concerns that have been raised by us. We never gave up as we knew that this was not the only problem in the way the Township is being managed. The OPP have now found 13 other forms of remuneration enhancements that were not executed as per the set by-laws.'

The report was expected to be raised at Adjala-Tosorontio's next regular meeting this past Tuesday, Oct. 11.