

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

JP-14

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

JP-14

**Standing Committee on
Justice Policy**

Strengthening Safety
and Modernizing Justice
Act, 2023

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Wednesday 17 May 2023

**Comité permanent
de la justice**

Loi de 2023 sur le renforcement
de la sécurité et la
modernisation de la justice

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Mercredi 17 mai 2023

Chair: Goldie Ghamari
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Présidente : Goldie Ghamari
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1710-9442

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICY**

Wednesday 17 May 2023

**COMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA JUSTICE**

Mercredi 17 mai 2023

The committee met at 0901 in committee room 2.

**STRENGTHENING SAFETY
AND MODERNIZING JUSTICE
ACT, 2023**

**LOI DE 2023 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA
MODERNISATION DE LA JUSTICE**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare / *Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives au système judiciaire, à la prévention et à la protection contre l'incendie ainsi qu'au bien-être des animaux.*

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to order. We are meeting today to resume public hearings on Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, which is today. The deadline for filing amendments to the bill is 5 p.m. on Friday, May 19, 2023.

Are there any questions before we begin?

Each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation, and after which, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee. It will be broken down into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition, and two rounds of four and a half minutes for the independent member.

**ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE
ASSOCIATION
TORONTO POLICE SERVICE**

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): I will now call upon the Ontario Provincial Police Association. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. James Girvin: Good morning. My name is James Girvin. I am legal counsel with the OPP Association. As many of you would likely be aware, the OPP is the largest

police service in Ontario and the second-largest in Canada. The OPP has 5,800 uniformed members, 2,600 civilian members and 600 auxiliary members. The OPP provides essential services that ensure the safety and security of people in Ontario. The OPP Association represents those 5,800 uniformed officers and 2,600 civilian members.

I appear today on behalf of John Cerasuolo, president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, who sends his regards and regrets for not being able to attend today. As many of you may have surmised, President Cerasuolo's attendance was required in Bourget to support and comfort the family and colleagues of Sergeant Eric Mueller, who was senselessly murdered when responding to a call for service, an incident that also saw two other OPP officers injured.

With your brief indulgence, I'd like to just further state that Sergeant Eric Mueller made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. While the family and colleagues are united in the grief, we're reminded of the tremendous admiration for this remarkable individual who dedicated his life to protecting and serving his community as a member of the OPP. He leaves behind a void that cannot be filled. Our hearts go out to his family as they navigate this difficult journey of grief.

You may also be aware that this was not the first incident that Sergeant Mueller was involved in, and injured, in the line of duty. In 2010, Sergeant Mueller—a constable, as he was then—appeared before a courtroom to convey the trauma he experienced after he was seriously injured and crushed and dragged along the side of his cruiser by a trailer of a transport driven on the westbound exit of Highway 401 at Cardinal on April 4, 2008. His response in that proceeding was, "What I remembered most was the fear of not being a police officer again." At that time, he was a 27-year-old OPP constable.

To Sergeant Mueller, we offer our deepest gratitude for his selfless bravery and sacrifice. We will forever remember him as a shining example of what it means to be a police officer. He is a hero in life who gave his life in the service of others.

Those in this room would know the monumental task that it is to craft and marshal legislation and regulations through the provincial Legislature. The act that we as the association are here to discuss and make comments on is certainly no small undertaking. We commend the government, the lawyers, the policy analysts and the administrative staff for their diligence, determination, collegiality

and willingness to meet and listen to divergent and disparate points of view in their efforts to advance this important legislation.

Front-line staffing has been and continues to be a significant challenge for the OPP and many police services across the province.

President Cerasuolo has already publicly acknowledged that the elimination of tuition will be of assistance as part of a broader recruitment strategy to reach diverse communities, by removing barriers to people with less access to financial resources previously required to attend police college.

Grants will provide the necessary financial resources to support active engagement and monitoring of bail compliance. The availability of police services to utilize those financial resources will be limited by ongoing staffing shortages and competing organizational priorities. The efficacy of this initiative must be tracked with a view to providing long-term stable funding to engage this important program that will enhance public safety and officer safety and confidence in the criminal justice system.

Specifically in relation to the Community Safety and Policing Act, I would just highlight a point in relation to section 25(1): the wording change from “provide adequate and effective policing” to “ensure adequate and effective policing.” There is a concern we would have that this change of wording may open the possibility that the municipality no longer has the direct responsibility to provide. This would also potentially permit municipalities to engage outsourcing. So that is a concern that the OPP Association has.

In relation to the removal of the OPP advisory committee, the question raises the issue of the potential lack of connection, communication and contact with the community. Obviously, in the provision of police services, it is integral to be connected to the communities we’re in. I should note that it is not unusual in the advisory committees around the province that front-line policing officers are sometimes tasked with engaging and meeting with these individuals across the province, and while that is an—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. James Girvin: —important role, as I have noted, there are staffing issues that compete for interest there.

I would also just quickly note in relation to oversight: The inspector general is crucial in maintaining the public trust and confidence in policing in Ontario. That is yet a further enhancement of policing oversight. People in Ontario should be aware that all policing organizations, including the OPP Association, are committed and recognize the role of public oversight in policing.

Subject to any questions, those would be my comments and submissions this morning. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

We’ll now call upon our next presenter, from the Toronto Police Service. Good morning. Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: I’m Svina Dhaliwal. Thank you, Chair and members of the standing committee, for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I’m honoured to be here today as the chief administrative officer and a member of the Toronto police command team, on behalf of Chief Demkiw.

My comments today really focus on the proposed amendments related to the recruitment and education aspects of the bill; specifically, the proposed change to remove the mandatory requirement for police officers to have post-secondary certificates. I will provide some insight from a local, on-the-ground perspective of how this actually impacts our hiring practices.

0910

Specifically around recruitment and applications: Similar to other employers, there is a significant focus on recruitment, hiring and retention in policing, and it faces many of the same challenges that other employers face in today’s labour market. As a result, we hire in large classes, so officers tend to retire in large waves. We lose, on average, specifically for Toronto, 250 officers per year to retirement; all of these would then need to be replaced. That is absent of just even the growth that many services face to address an overall greater demand for policing services. Specific to our experience, in 2023, we are expected to hire 450 officers this year, and that is over and above just replacement; otherwise, it would be 250, at minimum. In order to hire these officers, they go through a very rigorous, highly competitive process. For every one cadet we hire, the service has to go through at least eight to 10 résumés to find the best suited for the role. Depending on the year, as it is today, we receive about 3,000 to 3,500 unique applications annually.

As an instructional example of what the education requirement could do to the overall applicant pool, in anticipation of the new CSPA, our board hiring policy had already proactively included the post-secondary educational requirement, thinking we would put it in place when the act is in effect. We actually put it in our hiring practice for a very limited period of time at the end of 2021. For each class, we typically try to go through 1,000 to 1,500 applications; when we put that requirement in place, our applicant pool dropped to 700. In consultation with our board, we said that we shouldn’t maybe get too ahead of the act and other services, so we removed it and subsequently received immediately 500 more applications. This is a small but instructive example of how such a requirement could inadvertently exclude otherwise qualified candidates. Certainly, like other leaders in the sector, we have shared those insights.

Coincidentally, when the province did make the announcement that the requirement would be removed, we are seeing a 20% to 25% increase in the applications.

However, it’s important to note that removing the requirement is not lowering the standards for policing. It is just seen as removing barriers into a career path that is already highly competitive, that already builds in aptitude testing and ability to think critically and interpret procedures and laws. Both academic and technical skills are

assessed, developed and taught through our hiring and training practices and on the job.

At least 70% of our candidates do, in fact, come with some kind of post-secondary education. However, the average age of a Toronto police cadet is 29 years old, showing that what makes the right candidate for police extends beyond just education. Life experience, emotional intelligence, resilience, maturity, demonstration of public service, past experiences of volunteerism, giving back to the community, physical fitness—all of that makes part of what makes the right candidate. That is all part of what we consider when we consider a cadet into policing.

A related consideration and, frankly, one of the positive attributes of public safety and policing is that it is a career with many, many opportunities, certainly within large organizations like Toronto police. Whether that's being a special constable or a parking enforcement officer or a communication operator, we pride ourselves on being able to create upward mobility within our organization. Some of these roles may not have had a post-secondary education requirement. Twenty per cent of our class is made up of these internal candidates who are in the organization and now see that as a viable career path. Not having that as a barrier certainly is helpful for our internal culture and upward mobility as we build out often 30-year careers. This also is the case for those looking at second careers—so military personnel, those who may have had their own businesses, with lots of life experience. Not having this education requirement certainly helps attract those in our second-career path.

The last thing I would leave with is really this idea of lifelong learning. These careers, like many others, represent opportunity and personal and organizational obligations for lifelong learning. The fact is that most of our most successful members were recruited with high school diplomas, only to continue their educations throughout their working careers. Many services, like the Toronto police, have successful educational partnerships, and our members have benefited from that.

We also have a significant amount of hands-on and within-the-sector training—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: —opportunities through the Ontario Police College, the Canadian Police College, as well as the Toronto Police College. Key skills that are practical, like investigation skills, writing production orders, how to build a strong case, are taught on the job, in the sector, with the infrastructure that's available. This is the type of education that is specific to the roles that should be continued and drive a lifelong learning approach where practical and technical skills are required.

In conclusion, attracting the best in public safety requires a diverse, wide-ranging team with a mixed set of skills and life experiences and who are all united by values around empathy, compassion, skill, willingness to serve our communities. That is who we are hiring.

I'll conclude at this moment. I'm happy to take questions when it's time.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

Our third presenter, Policing-Free Schools, has informed the committee that they are not presenting, and they cancelled this morning.

We'll now turn to questions. This round will begin with the independent members for four and a half minutes. MPP Collard.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you to the presenters for making time this morning and being very succinct in your presentations.

I just have a couple of questions of validation, really. I'll direct my first question to Svina Dhaliwal.

You talked about how you had implemented, for a short term, the requirement for post-secondary education and that your pool of candidates dropped to 700; you also mentioned that you typically hire 450, so I'm understanding that the pool that you still got is more than what you need, in any event. Did you see any benefit of having people with higher education applying for the job?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: If I may respond, through you, Madam Chair: I think one of the metrics we measure, though, is—we do have a very high screen-out rate, so in order to have a really robust pool to work with, right now 1-to-8 or 1-to-10 would be what we need. In order to hire 450 people this year, ideally you would want at least 4,000 applications. So 700 to fill a class—it just limits your options. Our goal is to pick the best and brightest and the strongest, and so that drop would have impacted our ability to fill our class without making trade-offs and lowering our standards. Subsequently, we did remove it, and then we saw the uptick back to be able to fill a class with the highest calibre that we would want.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: We're talking about increasing significantly the amount of recruits a police service can take on. Can I hear you about the capacity of police services to take on more recruits and make sure that they are integrated in an appropriate manner? You've talked about providing continuing education, being taught on the job through whatever infrastructure was available. Do you feel like you have the capacity to take on much more?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: We do. In fact, we don't do this in isolation at Toronto police. Most of the services will lean on the province, through the OPC, the Ontario Police College. So that's where the bulk of the capacity needs to be created, in a way. The Toronto Police College, for our purposes—our maximum class size is 150, and we are staffed to do that.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you. How much time?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have one minute and 40 seconds.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Okay. Just one quick question, and I don't know who can answer that—maybe Mr. Girvin.

We're going to increase the number of the cohort—we're going to raise the number, accommodate more people to be taught. I would just like to know, are the classes typically full? Is it a program that's already full and that needs more capacity to bring more people?

0920

Mr. James Girvin: It is my understanding that the classes are regularly full. One of the challenges with the Ontario

Police College is capacity limits that they have in terms of being able to process more candidates.

I would just also follow up to my colleague Ms. Dhaliwal, in terms of educational background of individuals: The evidence on educational background is equivocal. There is no clear indication that less or more educational background enhances or improves police officer outcomes. That's important to know in terms of that consideration.

I would also note that the UK does not have any further educational requirements than that similar to Ontario and many of the provinces.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): If there are no further questions, we'll turn to the government for seven and a half minutes. MPP Coe, you may begin.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Chair. Through you, starting with Mr. Girvin: Thank you for your presentation. In that, you talked about some of the front-line staffing challenges. In part of that, you referenced a broader recruitment strategy that the OPP has in place and, as you move forward, would be considering modulating in some ways.

Can you share with the committee members some of the features of the OPP's broader recruitment strategy?

Mr. James Girvin: Well, it is not my specific area. I can advise that last week, we had gathered in Collingwood for a meeting of our members from across the province. In the course of that meeting, the OPP had made a presentation that they are rolling out an enhanced marketing strategy around the recruitment of individuals. That was new to me, hearing it that week. My apologies, but that's the limited amount of information I can provide to you on that.

As I say, I know that the OPP is actively engaged in recruitment. They hold recruitment meetings across the province. As the association, we also provide support for family members who may be seeking to become employed with the OPP. Those are the comments that I can make there.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Moving to another area, in particular within the context of the Community Safety and Policing Act: Does your association have any other policing issues it would like to raise for future consideration, as part of the legislative and regulatory changes to the act?

Mr. James Girvin: Well, the primary concern really revolves around the issue of staffing shortages, and that is not expressly related to the CSPA. But obviously, making recruit more accessible to more people will not only draw in more candidates, but it also will assist and ensure that the OPP recruit classes are even more reflective of the diverse communities they serve.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, sir, for those responses.

Chair, through you, to MPP Bailey.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Bailey.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Welcome to the presenters this morning.

I'll go to Ms. Dhaliwal, please, for a question. Could you comment on the feeling of your group on granting a King's Commission to front-line officers in the municipal forces, as is proposed in the legislation?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: Sorry; do you mind repeating the question?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sorry. Maybe I could speak into this mike here—the granting of the King's Commission to uniformed officers other than the OPP. They're going to open it up to municipal forces.

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: I don't quite have a perspective on that—

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's okay.

The second question, then: Do you have any perspectives on the importance of strengthening policing legislation in the city of Toronto?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: I think in terms of the amendments that have been proposed, those are responsive to support policing modernization. As many, I think, would know, we are certainly embarking on some significant police reforms; the entire sector is. Aspects around discipline, accountability, strengthening the role of the inspector general—those are all seen as encouraging and positive next steps.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you.

Madam Chair, to my colleague MPP Flack.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Flack.

Mr. Rob Flack: We talked about front-line challenges—and I would ask this to Mr. Girvin, please. Your fact about 250—or somebody said 250 officers a year retiring. There has been some debate, and having listened to this debate, as to whether post-secondary education is required—and I'd throw it out to both of you, I guess: Could you again, specifically, share why that is going to attract more police officers and you'll get the quality of police officers at the colleges?

Aylmer police college is in my riding, and I was fortunate to be with my colleague here, MPP Jones, to see the graduation. It was an impressive situation indeed.

So how do we fill that college, time in and time out, and how will this legislation and the change help that progress?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: I'll start off—and then if my colleague wants to follow.

My understanding of the Ontario Police College is, in fact, that the demand exceeds capacity, which is why we're moving towards four classes, because all services are hiring. All services are attracting a high calibre of candidates for consideration.

The Toronto experience around the educational requirement is that that is just one aspect in a very broad profile. Our average age is 29, as I mentioned. The aptitude piece that I think contributes to the educational requirement is tested in many other ways before hiring. It's also tested as part of the OPC curriculum, which is incredibly rigorous. And then there are lots of on-the-job aspects of it. What we're looking for is to build community leaders; we're looking for mindset; we're looking for empathy. That's what we target. The aptitude piece is tested, but it's validated throughout a career journey.

Mr. James Girvin: If I can just add to my colleague—the fact of the matter is that recruitment is a competition, and as my colleague has conveyed some of the numbers at Toronto Police Service, this is a competition for the available places at OPC—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. James Girvin: In that competition, individuals are measured in their totality against one another. If you were to advertise and say that one of the requirements of even being considered is post-secondary education, you will automatically be excluding individuals. This is not a situation where individuals who are not qualified are being processed; we can assure you of that. The rigorous screening of all individuals ensures that Ontario is getting the best candidates we can put before Ontarians.

Mr. Rob Flack: Great point. Thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have 20 seconds.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: We'll wait for the next round.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'll now turn to the official opposition. MPP Stevens, you may begin.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: To the presenters, thank you for coming this morning.

Mr. Girvin from the Ontario Provincial Police, I would like to offer our condolences—myself and my colleagues—to the family of officer Eric Mueller at this time. Please express our sympathy to his family. We're sending prayers and thoughts.

My first question is going to be, considering what happened to officer Eric Mueller in the line of duty and the increased prevalence of PTSD among officers in our police forces, how do you propose changes to address the need for the improvement of mental health supports for active duties? And also, can you touch on how it would affect our retired officers?

Mr. James Girvin: The role of police in society and the types of situations that they encounter imposes unique stressors on them. Through a career of dealing with such dynamic and challenging situations, one of the issues that arises—as many individuals in this room would know—is the exposure to and experiencing of post-traumatic stress disorder. You would all likely be aware of the Ombudsman's report.

Two or three years ago, the OPP, through the assistance and support of the government, put into place a mental health program called Encompas. That program has been invaluable for our members and their families—because it's important to remember that the impact of policing is not just on front-line officers but is also on the families of those members. The Encompas program has provided tremendous support to those individuals.

The presumptive change in the WSIB legislation has also enhanced the support that our members are getting.

It is an ongoing challenge. The service continues to adapt and identify issues in relation to mental health and seeks to respond on an ongoing basis to meet those challenges and support our officers.

0930

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: You did mention section 72, and I'd like you to elaborate, because you did say changing up the wording could direct the municipalities to provide—or it could cause outsourcing for municipalities. How do you foresee the repeal of section 72, which eliminates the Ontario Provincial Police Governance Advisory Council, affecting community safety in policing?

Can you elaborate on what you said in your opening statements?

Mr. James Girvin: Police services across this province have vital and important connections to the community. The advisory council provides such an opportunity to do that. If that is eliminated, there is a risk that there will be a degree of disconnect between the communities and the many OPP officers who work across the province and service those communities. It is vital in moving forward to maintain and enhance those connections.

As I mentioned, one of the challenges sometimes is that it is our front-line officers who are often engaged in some of these advisory situations, and so there is that competing operational interest. I don't think, on behalf of the association, that steps that may dilute the connection to communities are a positive way to move forward on that.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you.

Madam Chair, I'm going to pass the speakers' list over to my colleague.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Wong-Tam, you have three and a half minutes.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I just want to pick up on a point that was raised by Mr. Girvin.

You said there wasn't any conclusive research that having officers better educated or perhaps even better trained would produce better officers. I want to just bring your attention to some studies that have been conducted, largely in the US and even some in Canada, from criminologists who have said, "As police organizations have higher levels of educational attainment, that tends to build more community satisfaction and trust in police services that have higher averages." Would you dispute a statement like that from criminologist Michael Kempa?

Mr. James Girvin: Yes, I would. In fact, the evidence is not equivocal. There has been a lack of vigorous study in relation to any correlation between officer educational background and policing outcomes. With all due respect to Professor Kempa, who is well-versed in policing, the fact of the matter is that there hasn't been, certainly not in Canada—and even in the United States, back when the presidential task force on policing made such suggestions. The research is just not there to support the fact that educational requirements improve police officer outcomes.

I think very much what we should be more concerned about is, what is the training and support that officers receive when they are in that position? Is the organizational culture supportive? As my colleague Ms. Dhaliwal has said, our organization, like all police organizations, is engaged in lifelong learning experiences, and as you look at the hierarchy in our organizations, many of those individuals may have entered without post-secondary education, but in the course of their career, recognizing and having the desire to advance, they will undertake personally, and also with the support of the organization, to achieve higher academic understanding both of policing and the business of policing.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I appreciate your answer. I'm sorry that perhaps there's a disagreement there between yourself and the research.

I'm going to bring your attention to the mass casualty report that was just jointly released by the federal government as well as the province of Nova Scotia.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Within that report, they cite training about 100 times and, in particular, they also talked about the need for more education for officers—and I'm going to use education packaged up with additional higher-quality training. “Public Safety Canada work with provinces and territories to establish a three-year degree-based model of police education for all police services in Canada”—this is a recommendation that they've put forward. They are also suggesting that the federal government work constructively and proactively with provinces and territories to deliver upon this recommendation. The trend is that by having more highly qualified officers working in communities, building long-lasting partnerships, they are going to become better officers.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That's all the time we have for this round. You'll have to save that question for the next round.

We'll now turn to the independent members. MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Mr. Girvin, you mentioned that at the police college, recruits are in competition with each other for those spots—or maybe it's the services that are in competition with each other for those spots. How does that work? If Toronto has 600 applicants that they've filtered through their pre-process that they want to send to the college, and Ottawa has a couple of hundred, and the OPP has a bunch etc., how is the determination of who makes up that class—how does that operate?

Mr. James Girvin: Well, I'm sure my colleague Ms. Dhaliwal will agree that it's not an issue of not being able to fill the places at Ontario Police College; the issue is being able to process those individuals through. There is no shortage of qualified individuals who are showing up at the door—

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm not arguing with you on that. I'm saying, in an environment where there is a limited number of spaces at the college and most services are facing recruitment challenges—how is the decision of which recruits get to go to the college in a particular session? Which service gets to fulfill their requirements faster? What does that process look like?

Mr. James Girvin: Well, the various services get an allocation of spots there, so there is never a shortage of being able to fill them.

Mr. Stephen Blais: For the CAO, I think a lot of the concern or the debate or maybe just the questioning about the elimination of the post-secondary education requirement is because post-secondary education is seen by many as an indication of a degree of maturity and having been able to go through a process that requires time management and other aspects of life that you have to do in order to complete a post-secondary process. If that is eliminated—and I appreciate that it has never actually come into force—what measures, what screening or other tools are you using to ensure that the officers who are applying to be recruits have those basic skills, that level of maturity, that ability

to stay on task, organizational requirements etc., the kinds of skills that are needed to complete post-secondary education?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: Part of the upfront hiring process—there are a series of assessments. There is the basic OPC requirement that has built-in aptitude testing, which is timed and tests some basic level of skill and thinking. Then, as part of the interview process, there are scenario-based questions, there's a psychological test to test resilience and life experience and so on. Through that, in addition to the fitness requirement, you would start to develop an overall profile of what would make a suitable candidate in policing.

We actually have a pre-OPC training curriculum condensed and specific for Toronto, but then the training that has testing, that has a pass-fail component to it, really starts to test the time management and the skills and an ability to absorb an immense amount of information in a short period of time.

Mr. Stephen Blais: That profile that you're building—is that unique to your service or is that a common profile that's used either in Ontario or commonly across North America?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: There is a provincial standard that everyone adheres to—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: —as the minimum standard, but then, beyond that, we look at—and every service would look at their local needs: What are the communities that we are serving? Where does the person reside? Those aspects would be localized.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I have one final question. You indicated that when you remove the post-secondary requirement—something like double the number of applications or something like that. Of that increase in the potential, were they all people who did not have post-secondary education, and what was the pass-through rate there?

0940

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: No. Many of them still had it. I don't have the exact number of the incremental increase, how much of those was solely only based on the post-secondary. But what I can say is that, whether it's a new resident or a new citizen to Canada who maybe has post-secondary back home, just even having that would have potentially been seen as a barrier.

Really, we're trying to remove unintended barriers and put the education and the training where it should be placed as part of someone's career.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That's all the time we have for this round.

Turning to the government: MPP Hogarth.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you both for being here, and thank you both for your service to our community and keeping us all safe. We thank you for your service, and the people who work with you and alongside of you every day, rain or shine and throughout holidays.

As a member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore—that's the Toronto area—we see a lot of guns on our streets. We always say it's in somebody else's neighbourhood. This is a similar question to what I asked the Solicitor General,

who was here yesterday speaking on behalf of this bill. Just last week, we had a shooting just two blocks away from my house, five minutes away, where I walk my dog. It brings a little fear to our community. It makes everybody leery of what's going on. We see auto thefts all the time. There's not a day that goes by that we don't hear about break-ins.

Do you believe that public safety in Toronto will generally benefit from this bill, if it passes in the Legislature?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: Through you, Chair: Overall, what makes a stronger public safety infrastructure is having the right people in the right roles, and certainly some of the amendments that are proposed will enable that, in particular on the hiring side.

We do enjoy a lot of collaboration as a broader community safety and well-being program through the city and also through the province on funding some of the specific priorities that you have raised. I think it is a sort of whole-of-system approach, but specific to the bill, these are responsive, progressive changes that will overall strengthen public safety in the city and the province.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Mr. Girvin, do you have any comments on that?

Mr. James Girvin: I would just say, also, that it's clearly visibility, boots on the ground, catching up on the staffing shortages experienced in Toronto and experienced across the province. Visibility is important. It's also important to maintain the connections with the community. So I think very much some of the steps that are being suggested in this bill will advance those interests across the province and in Toronto.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'll certainly pass that along to the residents of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, because crime is one of our number one issues there.

No further questions, Chair.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Jones.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Through you, Chair: Thank you very much for bringing a different perspective—a professional, almost outside perspective—because we've heard from association leaders and chiefs of police and other professionals who are the boots on the ground, and their perspective is different. Your lived experience is equally as important.

The staffing status at both the OPP, which Mr. Girvin made comment on, and the Toronto Police Service, has been commented on by some of your respective leaders. It has been described as a situation in crisis, as a clear deficit, and there are some remedies that have been proposed by your colleagues in the uniform capacity, up to the executive level of the uniform capacity. Could you each share your respective opinions on what remedies we could have and how this bill might contribute to remedy that staffing situation or status at both the OPP and Toronto Police Service?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: I'll start, if you want to follow.

We've spoken at length about our staffing shortages as part of our annual budget process. We have a response time on our highest-priority calls, on average, of 20 minutes; that is up over the last number of years, when it used to be in the 12-to-15-minute range. That in and of itself, when the public expects when they call 911 that you are there right away, suggests that there are some staffing challenges.

Over the last five to seven years, we are down by anywhere from 400 to 600 officers, depending on the time when you measure, in a time when the city has actually continued to grow to the equivalent of smaller cities like London and Hamilton and so on. So we aren't keeping pace with the growth. We are not necessarily keeping pace with increasing demand for services. It is a function of personnel and people, but it is also about a whole-of-system approach around working with our partners, working with the city, taking a community safety and well-being approach, looking at alternative delivery measures, trying to do stuff to create capacity internally—whether that's technology, whether that's alternative ways of delivering something. But personnel is a key part of that, as well.

Mr. James Girvin: In addition to the comments from CAO Dhaliwal, I would just note that even for police services within Ontario—and, in fact, across Canada—it is a competitive process to get officers. The OPP has an experienced police officer program, where we will bring individuals from other services into the OPP. As you would likely have heard, there are bonuses now being paid, I believe in British Columbia, by some police services trying to recruit individuals. It is rampant in the US, where there are also staffing shortages, where they will pay bonuses for individuals to come from other services.

We should not be in a situation where we're having to compete with one another. This act does take a step forward, but I certainly encourage everybody to come up and think of more creative ideas of how to enhance that. If that's assisting and improving the image of policing and improving the image of policing as a career, those are all helpful ways that people in this room, through their constituents, can reach out and encourage people to get involved in policing.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Thank you very much for that unique perspective and your contributions.

I can now, through the Chair, pass it to my colleagues MPP Rae or MPP Saunderson—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Saunderson, you have a minute and 20 seconds.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to both of the panellists this morning.

We certainly share your outrage and grief about the passing of Sergeant Mueller.

I come from the municipal sector. When the Community Safety and Policing Act was brought in, we all went through our community safety and well-being plans, and my question—I'll start with you, Mr. Girvin. You mentioned the removal, through section 72, of the advisory council. I know that police services boards in our respective communities play a critical role in interfacing with our police services and making sure that they are responsive to our community needs. So I just wanted to start off with asking you, Mr. Girvin, for comment on how you think the advisory council versus the police services board—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have 20 seconds.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: What's the connection to the locality and the community?

Mr. James Girvin: Fundamentally, going back to the words of Sir Robert Peel, police are the community; the community is the police. When those connections are stronger, the policing is stronger and the communities are safer. When you implement changes that may put either barriers in that—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): My apologies. That's all the time we have for this round.

We'll now turn to the NDP for the final round of questions. MPP Wong-Tam.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Just following up on my question regarding the mass casualty report: The recommendation from that very large inquiry, which has produced this joint provincial and federal report, is to make sure that the officers are going to be better trained, with more academic rigour, to hopefully deliver better results. I think that they based that on consultations with criminologists, lawyers, crown attorneys and a whole host of subject matter experts before coming up with that recommendation. That recommendation seems to be backed up with research that has drawn conclusions that more training and more academically inclined officers will see them use, potentially, less than—almost 40% less likely to use force. They've also seen that 30% of those officers are less likely to fire their weapons in the line of duty, and there's also a lower rate of officers assaulted by civilians—if we can bring that into some type of conclusion. Given what the inquiry just produced as their report, we seem to be going in the opposite direction. So I just want to understand what the response of the government of Ontario should be, in your opinion, when the federal government comes calling with the results of that report, with the recommendations in hand, saying, "Can we work together to elevate the quality of policing, modernizing policing, as expected by communities?"

0950

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: If I may start—I think to your point on training, that is what is available on the job and, in fact, that is where increasingly we are investing more and more. As an example, all of our officers go through an annual refresher training. We've expanded that from the minimum of a day and basic requirements of the job—

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Can you clarify "we"?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: Toronto police.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you.

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: The Toronto police have expanded that to three days, to include a review of updated de-escalation scenarios, of resiliency, of dynamic scenarios. Based on what has happened in the last year, they will refresh that, and they've expanded that training to three days.

The Toronto Police College, specifically, has over 200 courses that are offered on-site, in addition to about 100 that are offered nationally through the Canadian Police Knowledge Network. There is absolutely a need to continue to invest in that, and I think the sector overall, and specifically Toronto police, has been trying to do that.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I am very aware of the hard work of Toronto police, especially with respect to leading the conversation, I would say, even nationally on this issue. It would be encouraging to see the efforts being scaled up

locally but also exported abroad, outside of our Toronto borders, and hopefully not the other way around.

With respect to the modernization task force—and just speaking about the Toronto police—that was a revolutionary report that came out, and it was championed by the chief at that point in time and subsequently, I think, by every interim chief and chief afterwards. There hasn't been anybody who has rebutted the report. That report was citing that the police colleges, including the Ontario Police College, should put more time and attention and energy into academic rigour, specifically because that was a request after consultation from the community but also from front-line officers of what they wanted to see.

We're hearing from community members as well as front-line officers that more training and more investment in their capacity to deliver high-quality policing services that are community-responsive is what the grassroots, if I can call them, have asked for, but we have a bill whose spirit is going to go contrary to that. How do we square that up, considering that's what officers on the front line are asking for—more training, more support? That's what community members are asking for—more training, more support for the officers. And then we have a bill that seems to be going in a different direction.

Mr. James Girvin: Well, I don't agree—

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Oh, sorry. My question was for Ms. Dhaliwal. I'm speaking specifically about the modernization task force.

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: Apologies.

I think academic rigour comes in many forms, and so the way we have interpreted that in Toronto police is in a few ways. We have academic partnerships with institutions like Schulich, York University, and Toronto police, through their Rotman management program. We have also taken it upon ourselves to civilianize aspects of the college and bring in former academics and professors to teach some of our material. Creating the academic rigour can take place through partnerships, through bringing in the qualified people to teach, but also through creating a very robust leadership framework that does allow at various points in people's careers to go and take the formal education when required and when reasonable. Through all of that is how we have implemented those TTF recommendations.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Specifically, because you raised what I believe is a very good point about the professionalization of the force, and certainly we're seeing it on the ground—I've heard my community members talk about the need for more neighbourhood community officers. It's really one of the best services that Toronto police has been focused on delivering, and my community wants to see more of that. I think most communities want to see their officers embedded in the community, building broad, long-term relationships and, in some cases, trust. That's how we are able to make those communities safer and healthier.

Because the officers are also working embedded with the FOCUS tables and oftentimes, with respect to community agencies on the ground, those who are health and housing service providers, those who provide mental health supports—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: It's incredibly important to see all of that embedded. When those officers talk about the supports that they need in conversations—they need to see those service providers well-funded and resourced so that there is adequate supportive housing, mental health and addictions support and pathways to referral, so the officers aren't stuck being the social workers, the mental health workers. Would you agree with those officers' assertions of what they also need?

Ms. Svina Dhaliwal: Yes, I would agree that it's a whole-of-system approach that requires adequate funding for all upstream and downstream as well.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much. My time?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have 15 seconds.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Okay. I will relinquish that.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank both of our presenters for joining us this morning.

Mr. Girvin, please extend our condolences to everyone at the OPPA as well as Sergeant Mueller's friends and family on his tragic passing.

At this point, the committee will recess—yes, MPP Stevens?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I was wondering if I could have a point of order.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Regarding—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Regarding the date of next week's committee meeting. I'm wondering if we can take into consideration moving the—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): We'd have to wait until after, because we're in the middle of public hearings right now. You'd have to bring this once we've concluded public hearings.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Okay. Sorry. Please conclude. I apologize.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That's okay. It just has to happen after—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes, thank you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): At this point, we'll recess, and we'll resume at 1 o'clock. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 0956 to 1300.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to order. We are meeting today to resume public hearings on Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare.

As a reminder, the deadline for written submissions is 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, which is today. The deadline for filing amendments to the bill is 5 p.m. on Friday, May 19, 2023.

Are there any questions before we begin our public hearings?

Each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation, and after we have heard from all of our presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee. The time for questions will be broken down into two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the government members, two rounds of seven and a half minutes for the official opposition, and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent member.

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE

POLICE ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): At this time, I'd like to call upon the Ottawa Police Service acting chief, Steve Bell.

Please state your name for the record, and then you may begin. You will have seven minutes.

Mr. Steve Bell: My name is Steve Bell. Thank you for having me here today and for providing me with the opportunity to speak about Bill 102 and the overall landscape in policing right now. The Ottawa Police Service is committed to increasing the diversity of its members in order to better represent the communities we serve. Bill 102 will provide opportunities for genuine and skilled candidates who otherwise would not be considered.

Being a police officer is more than just having the right university degree. We value diverse life experiences and acquired skills. We have been making significant strides in strengthening relationships with racialized and marginalized communities and increasing our own internal diversity.

Over the course of my career, I met with some very strong candidates, people who were deeply interested in their communities, who would have gone on to be fantastic police officers but who were blocked because of multiple barriers. At the Ottawa Police Service, we've been working to remove these barriers. This decision by the government is another example of the removal of some barriers.

Like the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, we agree that these changes will help provide opportunities to candidates who may not have had access to higher education for a variety of reasons, like financial costs or growing up in remote communities. We also need to develop policies and legislation that support the important work we're doing to support community safety and well-being within our communities, and we need to be working with community leaders to develop approaches that build positive relationships and enhance community safety.

Take, for example, what's going on in our schools. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made a decision to move towards an emergency-response-based relationship with police, and away from having uniformed officers in schools providing direct learning and support to students. This meant that officers in uniform were not allowed in schools unless responding to an emergency situation.

We did see the comments from Minister Lecce recently, and we welcomed them. The decision to remove officers from schools significantly impacted our ability to connect

with youth in the community. We hear about this from principals and vice-principals almost daily. We've demonstrated the value of providing proactive youth services and building strong partnerships for school safety. Our role includes assisting youth who are experiencing abuse or violence, as well as seeking out supports to assist them. We also continue to respond to emergency situations, like a weapons-related call in a high school recently that prompted a lockdown.

We see reports about increased violence in all of our schools, right across Ontario. Every day, I'm deeply concerned about this disconnect between the school boards and the police services. Our schools should be a place where kids feel safe, where our teachers feel safe. Police officers have an important role, not only in responding to emergency situations, but investing in prevention and relationship-building.

The Ottawa Police Service and all of our four school boards have a long history of working together. We want to continue that relationship to benefit youth and their important place in our community. The ability of our officers to present and interact with youth builds trusts and lets them know they can reach out to us for help. It's important that they know that the police are available for help.

Our school resource officer program was a successful program, and it provided a way to ensure the safety of all students, teachers and parents for over 20 years. Our SROs worked with students and their families to develop a plan to deal with violent or anti-social behaviour and help to resolve differences between students. It was a holistic approach that considered the social impacts and looked to find permanent solutions. Often, our SROs would connect these students with other social services to provide long-term supports, particularly for those who were struggling. I can't tell you how many thank yous I've received from parents who were at the end of their rope trying to help their children and, by working with our SROs, were able to find viable and successful solutions. SROs show to students, their families and educators that police are, in fact, there to help.

Since the SRO program ended, police are still engaged with schools, as we'll always respond to calls for help. In 2022, officers attended Ottawa-area schools 446 times for incidents that occurred within school campuses. In 2023, we're seeing those numbers continue to climb, with police being called to schools 185 times to date, to help resolve incidents that required a police response; that's just within the four months of this year alone.

We're also seeing an increase in hate-motivated incidents on our school campuses. These have occurred both during and after school hours. Educators have contacted us for assistance in dealing with these issues. We continue to do our part to help reduce these types of incidents from occurring. Recently, we trained principals from two different school boards on issues like hate and bias-motivated crimes that we've seen increasing in the schools.

I want to be clear: When our officers are called to attend, it's for very serious matters, including these hate-motivated

incidents. On one call, officers were asked to respond after one student heard another student say that he was going to shoot up the school. At another school, a student told others he was going to bring an AK-47 machine gun into the school. These are happening with kids as young as 14 years old. There are countless more stories like this, where educators learn of threats and call us for help. Often, our neighbourhood resource team officers or our youth officers are tasked with meeting with the students and their parents to develop solutions, including diversion programs that seek to identify the core issues and provide needed supports.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute left.

Mr. Steve Bell: These officers have specialized training to deal with issues like bullying and mental health concerns.

But it puts us at a disadvantage to not actively be engaged on school campuses so that issues like this can be easily identified early. We wind up being reactive rather than proactive. I don't think people realize just how common these violent types of incidents are within our schools and schools across the province. Frankly, I think our kids deserve better.

I recognize that there are some in our community who are apprehensive about police presence in schools. We appreciate the concern and fear felt by those individuals and by some youth. Those voices should not be ignored but instead addressed and recognized. It is only by getting together and engaging in constructive dialogue that we can identify issues and resolve them. Instead of closing the door completely, we need to work on understanding concerns and then developing a response that is sensitive and responsive to those concerns. We want to find a way forward that ensures we can continue to help our kids and keep our schools safe, but it takes a commitment from police, our legislators, and those in opposition to meet and find the way forward together. I'm confident we can get there.

Thank you very much, and I appreciate your questions.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Thank you very much.

We'll now turn to our next presenter: from the Police Association of Ontario, President Mark Baxter. You may begin.

Mr. Mark Baxter: Thanks for having me here today. My name is Mark Baxter. I'm the president of the Police Association of Ontario. The PAO represents over 28,000 policing professionals from across Ontario. I'm proud to speak to you on their behalf today.

Before I begin my prepared remarks, I want to take a moment to recognize the sacrifice of OPP Sergeant Eric Mueller. Sergeant Mueller was tragically killed in the line of duty last week. His funeral is in Ottawa tomorrow. I offer the condolences of our board of directors and the entire membership to Sergeant Mueller's family, friends and his colleagues. Thank you all for keeping him in your thoughts as our community continues to reflect on this tragedy.

1310

The Police Association of Ontario welcomes Bill 102. It makes several necessary technical changes to the Community Safety and Policing Act that we agree are

necessary to allow the act to fulfill its potential when it comes into force. The PAO has been fortunate to partner with successive governments as the act has gone through a long journey from conception to finality. This act brings much-needed change to how policing is regulated in Ontario, and our members are looking forward to working under a clearer and fairer set of rules and procedures that will allow us to serve our communities for decades to come. Bill 102 makes some critical changes to the act to strengthen civilian oversight. Robust oversight of the policing landscape promotes public trust and accountability and gives our members the confidence that they are working in a system that prioritizes doing the job well. For example, by ensuring that the inspector general is afforded the full suite of tools they need to ensure that our police chiefs, members of police boards, members of OPP detachment boards and other police governors are complying with the requirements of the law, it is clear that the government is promoting accountability from the very top of police governance all the way down to the member working in the local community.

This bill also represents a continuing commitment to police recruitment. Today, Ontario's police services are working through an acute labour shortage. Our members are too frequently left short-handed on shifts, and we are working collaboratively with Ontario's chiefs of police and Ontario's police services boards to find solutions to this issue. We all agree that Ontarians deserve to be secure in the knowledge that their local police service has the personnel it needs to fully provide the services they expect. I'm confident that the solutions are coming, but now is not the time to add further barriers to police recruitment.

Today, Ontarians join their local police services from all walks of life. Many have been educated at a college or university and can bring the perspective and skills that they have gained from their studies to their career as a police officer. Others come to policing after pursuing other careers in the trades, service or other industries. These members often are prepared to work hard, and there is no question about their ability to succeed at Ontario's police college, but they are not often prepared to take multiple years out of their lives to complete post-secondary education. It is also unreasonable to ask someone who wishes to make a career change to serving their community to put a two-year pause on their ability to earn a living and support their family. Under the current version of the CSPA, these individuals would likely be shut out of a career in policing. That should not be a result for which anyone is advocating. The PAO supports the amendments to ensure that these types of quality candidates continue to have access to a career in policing.

Lastly, the PAO requests that an additional amendment to the CSPA be added to this bill. Subsection 40(4) of the act describes the line between those issues about which the police services board may instruct the chief of police and those issues where the chief has the prerogative to make decisions based on the authorities of their public office.

Chiefs, boards and associations have spent years litigating the language around the predecessor section, subsection 31(4) of the Police Services Act. If subsection 40(4) comes into force as drafted, unnecessary confusion will be introduced into this balancing act. It will take years of subsequent litigation to get us back to the status quo. At issue is a single word change. Where the current PSA says that the "day-to-day operations" of the service are the chief's exclusive domain, the CSPA uses the term "day-to-day administration" to describe this sphere of control. The amendment we are proposing would be to maintain the use of the word "operations." We hope that all will support this simple amendment.

I am happy to take any questions that you may have about this or any other matters that I'm here to discuss this afternoon.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Mr. Baxter, for your presentation.

This round of questions will start, please, with the official opposition, followed by the independent members, then the government. MPP Wong-Tam.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you for your presentations.

Mr. Baxter, can you just go back to your very last point? Which section are you referring to?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Subsection 40(4) of the CSPA.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much.

With respect to schedule 1, if I can start there: The bill is proposing that section 72 of the act be repealed and struck out, so therefore it would eliminate the Ontario Provincial Police Governance Advisory Council. Recognizing the fact that policing generally needs more oversight, are you supportive of having that advisory council now removed, effectively rendering less oversight?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Is that to me?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: To either one of you.

Mr. Mark Baxter: Certainly, I don't have a position on the OPP advisory board. I think that answer is probably—it would be more suited to ask the Ontario Provincial Police Association or the OPP commissioner.

Mr. Steve Bell: I would agree with that; I wouldn't have a position on OPP advisory.

What I would say, though, is that one of the key fundamentals of this bill is built around strong governance and oversight over police. I think that is a very important part of what's being proposed, although I cannot comment on how it would apply in the OPP jurisdiction.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I guess the elimination of the OPP Governance Advisory Council would therefore eliminate some oversight. Thank you. I recognize what you've just said.

With respect to the Mass Casualty Commission report that just came out of Nova Scotia, jointly released with the federal government, one of the highlighted recommendations, after a very long and what I think would be a very technical and difficult review, just given the circumstances that led to that commission—were findings that were vetted and then ultimately put forward as a recommendation that

Public Safety Canada is asked to work with provinces and territories to develop and establish a three-year degree-based model of policing for police education for all police services in Canada. That's the latest conversation, and that conversation and research and development were really brought out and brought forward by a number of subject matter experts: criminologists, the sector around policing, crown attorneys, defence attorneys. There were a lot of voices who were involved, including victims.

I'm just really curious—that when the federal government comes calling on the provincial governments and raises the commission's report, we would be in a different position, asking them to exempt us from that criteria. This bill would ensure that we would then tell the Canadian government that we're not going to follow the commission's report, that we would not be supporting their recommendation, that Ontario is going to go on a different path. Is that your understanding of what this bill would represent, in terms of how we would then respond to the federal government when they come calling to try to consistently deploy that recommendation across Canada?

Mr. Mark Baxter: First of all, that tragedy is something that we are all still mourning over—the largest mass shooting in Canadian history. We continue to mourn with the families and the loved ones of the 22 people who were murdered, including our colleague RCMP Constable Heidi Stevenson.

What we're talking about and what that recommendation is is something separate than what is included in Bill 102. The recommendation in the report for the three-year degree program that you're referencing is in reference to, once someone has been hired as a police officer, they would then enter into that stream. Whether or not we would do that in Ontario—that's certainly a conversation, I think, for another day. The recommendation isn't that that be implemented until, I think, 2032.

What we're talking about today is getting potential recruits into the door before that set of criteria—and that's where the education requirements come in now. Maintaining and preserving the status quo on the current bill is really important for a wide variety of reasons.

But the idea of the three-year degree that is contemplated in the mass casualty report—that's a conversation that would have to be had after we've hired someone as a police officer, then they would perhaps go into that stream.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: So am I hearing from you that you would be agreeable to the development of a three-year policing degree, as recommended by the Mass Casualty Commission? If the assumption here is that we remove the upfront post-secondary requirement—let's just say that we do away with that—am I hearing that you would welcome the commission's recommendation to then develop a very police-specific, three-year degree?

Mr. Mark Baxter: If the government were to implement that recommendation as a replacement to the Ontario Police College for once someone has been hired as a police officer, that they will then enter into that program, certainly, we would be a stakeholder at the table, and we'd be happy to consult on it at the time and provide our input at

that time. But I think that piece of it is a conversation probably—it's not really relevant to this, in my view.

1320

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I think it is relevant—and I don't want to be a contrarian for the sake of it. I think largely it is relevant because we're talking about effective and modernized policing. Considering that the commission's is the very latest document to come out after years of deliberation and output, it's going to be a topic that we're going to have to face in Ontario one way or the other—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute left in your questioning, please.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you.

Just to clarify: In the report from the mass casualty shootings in Nova Scotia, they specifically talked about implementation of the section that I just read to you, which says that the education model “should be research-based, allow students the opportunity to participate in research, and lead candidates to a three-year bachelor's degree in policing.” So, to me, it would make sense that we not necessarily jump to a conclusion that police officers would require less education or less training or less academic rigour. In this case, we've got a commission that's brand new—hot off the presses—that's recommending something contrary to what Bill 102 is proposing. So are you disagreeing with the Mass Casualty Commission's findings?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Chair, point of order.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes, point of order. Go ahead.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: We're here to discuss Bill 102, and I think the witness has already answered the question about the relevance of the report and the recommendations of the mass casualty report as being a discussion for another day. I don't think then putting words in his mouth to suggest that he's contradicting what's in the report by supporting this is a fair question. I think the question has been asked and answered.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I just want to remind the member to keep your questioning to the parameters of the bill, please, and—how much time do we have left, Clerk?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Four seconds.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Four seconds.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Mr. Chair, thank you very much for that reminder. We're talking about a bill with seven schedules that really stretch into a whole host of areas, including—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Your questions and—it's concluded. Thank you.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: On a point of order, Chair—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Your time is done.

Interjections.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm not asking a question—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. You're out of order now.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I've raised a point of order.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): No—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: You can't raise a point of order—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right, I've got this.

You're finished with your question. You're finished with your narrative.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Point of order, Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Point of order, then.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Chair. What I wanted to highlight is that because the bill has seven sections and the piece around schedule 1 has about four different tangents—one of them specifically speaks to the component of education, so any question that I raise forward and bring forth related to the training and education of police officers is not out of order.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Okay.

Let's move on then, please, to the independents. MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you both for coming.

Chief, it's good to see you again.

There has been a lot of discussion and debate about the change to educational requirements that's in the bill, and we've heard from other witnesses over the last day or two about their thoughts about that.

I'm wondering, Chief, if you could explain for us: Once a new recruit returns to Ottawa from the police college, what does the training and education environment for that recruit look like in the city of Ottawa with OPS?

Mr. Steve Bell: Thank you for the question.

One of the things I think is important to remember for us in Ottawa—and I think in every police service across Ontario and Canada—is that we try to create an ongoing learning environment. There aren't blocks or chunks as you go through in terms of learning. I'll tell you, I've been a police officer for 28 years; there isn't a day that I don't get the opportunity to learn something new.

In terms of our formalized training program, officers, before they actually depart for the Ontario Police College, come into our recruiting centre for approximately four weeks. They then go to the Ontario Police College for 13 weeks—soon to be, in the next intakes, 14 weeks—for intensive provincial-based training. They then come back to our police college for another 10 weeks, where they get additional training. Once they pass all of those requirements, they go with the coach officers for a number of hours until they're deemed to be able and ready to do independent patrol. But it doesn't stop there. We offer training programs on a regular basis. We try to ensure that our officers are continually, through formalized education as well as exposures and interactions within our community, engaging themselves in proactive, long-term learning. One of the things about being a police officer is, if you don't want to learn, it's not a job for you.

So I do appreciate all of the concern around the educational requirements that exist. What I would say is, as the chief of police or a deputy chief of police now responsible for recruiting, one of the areas that we have to focus on is the ability to remove barriers so that we can get people into our environment.

Mr. Stephen Blais: What does the recruiting situation in Ottawa look like these days in terms of, are you meeting your targets, not meeting your targets, how many new recruits do we need every year etc.?

Mr. Steve Bell: I think it's a really important piece to contemplate as we look at this legislation, as well. We are entering—nationally, internationally—a different workforce. People don't stay in jobs the same amount of time. We have a massive amount of retirements coming us to. There are going to be great demands on policing services across the country, as in every industry, to make sure that they can recruit, train and retain quality people to deliver the work.

We feel very fortunate in Ottawa because we have a dedicated and very strong outreach recruiting team that is actively out every day, trying to bring people through our doors to apply into our service. We have done considerable amounts of work over the last number of years to remove barriers to allow people to get in so that we can quickly run them through our processes and get them into the training process. We do have a number of recruits who are coming forward. We do have people who want to work in the Ottawa Police Service, and we are able to fill—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute left.

Mr. Steve Bell: —our recruiting numbers and the people we need to hire.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I don't have any other questions.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 45 seconds, MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I'm done. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the government, please: MPP Ghamari.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, Chief Bell, for joining us here today.

I'm very grateful to the men and women who go out every day and put their lives on the line—and I think we can see it with the tragedy that happened last week. My condolences to everyone on the passing of Sergeant Mueller. It's unfortunate that there are people who will try to politicize these situations or try to create division and sow division between members of the community and the public and policing, especially since I think we are at a time when we need to work together to build and grow together as a community.

So thank you for taking the time to be here—and you, as well, President Baxter.

I want to talk a little bit about the post-secondary education situation that we're discussing here. It has never actually been a requirement provincially, correct?

Mr. Steve Bell: That is correct.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: That's what I thought.

There have been some members of the NDP who have gone out and claimed that this is going to put guns in the hands of 17-year-olds.

What's the average recruiting age for an officer at the city of Ottawa?

Mr. Steve Bell: I don't have the exact age, but I can tell you the normal recruiting age is in the late twenties. We

very infrequently hire people younger than 23 or 24, and we have a number of people, as President Baxter indicated, who come into the career later in their life.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: So what would you say would be some of the more important factors or criteria that the Ottawa Police Service looks at when considering a potential candidate for the Ottawa Police Service?

Mr. Steve Bell: We look at many different factors. We look at connection within the community. We look at work experience. Education is a piece that we do consider as we move ahead. I think potentially what's missing in the dialogue is the fact that this is a minimum standard. We as a police organization don't actually drive to a minimum standard. When we consider the removal of the need for a university degree, we're looking at removing a barrier, but that doesn't mean that what we're going to do as an organization is go and not hire anyone with a university degree.

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In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a height requirement within the police service, and what that allowed, when that was removed, was the fact that that barrier was taken away, so shorter people—traditionally women, because it was a barrier to women—were able to come into our police service. But that doesn't mean that we only hired shorter people in our organization.

So I think it's really important to remember that the removal of barriers creating minimum standards for entry is an important thing to consider, but that doesn't mean, as a police organization, that is strictly what we will hire to and only hire in that.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Chief Bell, I've been very involved with the policing community in Ottawa and always take the time to learn as much as I can about it. One of the things that I'm hearing from a lot of our front-line men and women is that there is a bit of a staffing challenge, and we've heard this from other witnesses as well. There seems to be a shortage.

Do you feel that continuing along with this policy of not having that mandatory minimum education, as well as eliminating the tuition fees for the OPC, would be beneficial in assisting the Ottawa Police Service with perhaps finding more qualified candidates to recruit?

Mr. Steve Bell: I do, because I believe that what that will do is, again, remove barriers. It will allow us to look across broader groups of people. Tuition is a good example—because it will allow us to recruit and attract people who may not have considered policing, because of the financial cost of receiving the training. So I do believe it is something that will open up the pools that we have access to.

I think right now, in the time we're in, as I talked about before, with the changing demographics of our workforce, with the immense amount of retirement that policing hasn't even started to feel yet but will feel within the next couple of years over multiple years out, we do need to look at ways that we can attract, bring in and retain qualified, capable, diverse candidates within our police services.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: And just with respect to the school situation—I appreciate you bringing that up, because I

think that was a very important issue. When I first found out about it, I was shocked. I was, quite frankly, appalled. I couldn't understand why.

You're here in uniform and you're proudly wearing it, and I think that's amazing, because this is something that I think we need to support, to show our community that we take pride in our police. I really believe that.

I'm speaking as an immigrant myself, coming here from Iran, and the police there really are corrupt. We're dealing with a fascist dictatorship there. Immigrants like myself come to Canada because they want to live in a free and democratic society. My parents raised me to always have respect for the police, to trust the police. You are the good guys. And so for myself, as an immigrant, a visible minority woman, this is how I feel, because I come from a place where it is vastly, vastly different.

Do you have any thoughts or comments when you have someone like Lyra Evans, chair of the school board trustees, essentially blaming US policing politics or saying that's the reason for her decision here in Ottawa? Is there any correlation between the Ottawa Police Service and what happens in the United States?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute left in the answers and questions.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I would assume the answer is no, but I just would like some clarification. Is there any relationship there?

Let me rephrase: Is it fair for school board trustees to accuse the Ottawa Police Service of things that are happening in the United States?

Mr. Steve Bell: No, but I do believe it has somewhat of an impact in perception. What I will say is that the biggest concern I have with the position that has been taken is the fact that it doesn't allow for dialogue. There are people who are afraid of police within those schools; we recognize that. We need to acknowledge that, and we need to look at the opportunities to create dialogue, so that we can improve that situation, so we can understand what the root cause of those issues is, so we can make the changes we need to make and we can educate them in the ways they need to educate. You don't do that by putting people in different rooms and not allowing them to interact.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I know my time is up, but—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. That concludes the questions and answers for the first round.

We'll start the second round with the official opposition. MPP Stevens, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: First of all, I would like to start off by correcting the record—welcoming our presenters, of course. Good afternoon. I'd like to correct the record of the honourable member within this committee. Not one of the members from the official opposition or the New Democratic Party on this committee ever has said that this bill will put guns in the hands of a 17-year-old. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for letting me put that on the Hansard.

Welcome, to our presenters. It's an honour to have you here this afternoon. After everything that has gone on in Ottawa within the past couple of years with COVID, I

respect that your community—I respect what they did with the little that they had.

My son is in the military. He has often done hiring. He's on the recruitment process. PTSD comes up all the time.

With your experience that happened in Ottawa over the past couple of years—that was a very traumatic experience, I'm sure, for your officers on the front line, for those who really, really saw a lot of things that were happening. How are your members doing in the wake of it? Did it result in trauma, and does that trauma persist?

Mr. Steve Bell: Thank you for the question

I'm very happy that you focus on our members. Our members have been through an exceptionally difficult time in the last number of years.

But what I will say—and I would imagine President Baxter will support me: Police officers across this country do an exceptionally difficult job on a daily basis. Nearly every situation that they enter into is someone's worst day, and that is what they look to navigate through—that is what they look to do and support, and that, as caring members of this society and community that they are and that we aim to hire, is taxing and challenging.

I can tell you that for the Ottawa Police Service and police services across the country, the health and wellness of our members is always at the forefront—in trying to help them manage what is a very, very challenging job.

The events of the last year have created challenges—but I would couple on top of the challenges of their policing response are some of the difficulties we have around staffing challenges, around not as much filling vacancies, but making sure that we can retain people, making sure that we can support them in the right way so that their mental health isn't impacted to the point that they can't continue to serve their communities. These are big challenges and struggles for leaders within policing, for associations who look to support their members on an ongoing and daily basis, and it's something that we take very seriously.

I will say thank you very much for acknowledging our members, because they are truly the ones who do the amazing work every day.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Absolutely. They're the ones on the front line. Relay our thanks to them for what they've done, please.

Also, you mentioned mental health. With the proposed changes, how can we ensure that the police training still includes substantial required training in equity, human rights, mental health and de-escalation? Do you see that being a—

Mr. Steve Bell: I don't see that being a barrier, because I think what you're seeing is, continually, on an ongoing basis, in the Ottawa Police Service as well as through the Ontario Police College curriculum, those components being integrated. The reality of what our officers face on a daily basis is that Ontario, Canada, is a changing society. We look different than we did 10 or 15 years ago. We need to police differently.

I can tell you, focus within the Ottawa Police Service is around equity, diversity and inclusion, and making sure that we train, equip and prepare our officers to have a culturally

competent and appropriate response in all the different situations that they encounter.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for that.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to pass it on to my colleague MPP Mamakwa.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Mamakwa, please. You have two minutes and 50 seconds.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch. Thank you, Steve and Mark, on your presentation.

I just want to first start off, again, thinking of the officers you work with. I know it's always difficult to be able to handle the situations that come your way. I have some friends who are officers, and I hear stories of the struggles that they have, whether it's PTSD—but I just want to share this story.

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I was telling another group yesterday that we have a term in my language—my first language is Oji-Cree—for officers. “Tukaanaawehnineh” is a person who takes away people. That's the description of a police officer—and that's our experience as First Peoples of these territories, of these lands. It comes from the days of the residential schools. Police used to take children away from their families. I just want to ask this question: What work have you done so people do not think that—especially Indigenous people?

Mr. Mark Baxter: I think we are always looking for opportunities to better understand the historical challenges that have taken place in our communities. I know when I was at the police college in 2005, there was some learning around—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): There's one minute left in the response and question.

Mr. Mark Baxter: Thank you.

There was some learning around the Indigenous culture and the history of the residential schools and the role that the police played in that.

I come from the Brantford Police Service, which is next door to Six Nations. While I was working there full-time, we were constantly receiving cultural training so that we could better understand the history. If we could understand what happened in the past, then that would help us inform—as we're working with and interacting with individuals of the different Indigenous communities.

Mr. Steve Bell: Can I go? Yes?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 16 seconds.

Mr. Steve Bell: In preparation for this, last night I met with an amazing group of people called the Community Equity Council, which is Indigenous, racialized and faith-based community leaders. What I can tell you—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Chief. I'm going to have to cut you off.

To the independents, please: MPP Collard.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Ask him to finish his thought.

Mme Lucille Collard: Yes, I will ask you to finish your thought, because I think that's an important question, and I'll follow up with another question.

Mr. Steve Bell: Thank you very much. As President Baxter indicated, we have to recognize and learn from our

past so that we can rewrite our future, and I believe that the only way we can do that is by having inclusive dialogue, by actually bringing people with different lived experiences from within Canada—far before myself or my ancestors were here—and from other countries, who come in today, yesterday and tomorrow, to help form what is the new Canada. We have to listen to those people. But, as a police leader, I recognize that just listening isn't good enough. We have to hear them, and we have to take direction from them.

One of the things that we actively do within the Ottawa Police Service is engage our Community Equity Council to give us sage, sound advice, guidance and direction. I could tell you they have a massive impact on the decisions that are made within our leadership team to move policy direction ahead. If we don't learn from the past, engage the people who lived the past, have the lived experience to help make decisions moving ahead, we won't be able to change. That's what we're embracing in the Ottawa Police Service.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: You talked about how the job can be challenging and difficult. I have to tell you that I really had close experience with that kind of challenge, because I was very close to what was happening during the Ottawa convoy. I was having almost daily conversations with officers, and I can appreciate the challenges that it constituted.

You did speak about the importance of having officers in school. I think that everything starts with education and, really, kids should learn to understand what the role of police officers is instead of fearing them. Parents have a role to play, for sure. And I think the fact that we're moving away from post-secondary education may attract more younger candidates—and that's probably not a bad thing, especially if you're considering the presence of police officers in school.

I have to say that we're doing positive things all across Ontario, but in Ottawa, I particularly appreciate the presence of community police officers. I think that's a great concept, and it's making a lot of improvement to the perception of police.

I want to give you an opportunity to speak more about your strategy about responding to the concerns of adding police officers in schools, because I think they are important and there's a perception that we need to correct. So what kind of strategy you are working on?

Mr. Steve Bell: Thank you for the question.

You started off talking about the convoy—a hugely traumatic experience in our city, deeply impacting on our officers. But I don't think we can talk about the convoy without talking about the impacts on our community, because the impacts were profound on the communities where that occurred.

One of the key things that we have been focusing on since the convoy is making sure that we engage in every opportunity for dialogue to hear, to listen, to learn, to change how we deliver policing services, particularly—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute left for questions and answers.

Mr. Steve Bell:—in those areas around demonstrations. That can directly be related to what we feel is important in the schools. If you don't have conversations with people, if you don't have dialogue, if you don't start to know one another and understand one another, I don't see a way where you can begin to think about how you resolve your differences, solve your problems and move forward together.

I think it's fundamentally important that police have the opportunity to create these dialogues, recognize that there is fear amongst some around policing, and we need to figure out what's causing that and work together on how we change that so we can move ahead. Policing is an important of our society, I believe, and I think we need to recognize that and bring it into the fold to create a better society, as opposed to pushing it out to the side.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): That concludes the questions and answers for the independents.

I'll move now, please, to the government. MPP Ghamari.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I just have a very, very quick “yes or no” question for both of you. Would it be fair to say that by removing or by making sure that the mandatory minimum post-secondary education is not required, we're removing barriers, especially in rural and First Nations policing, to allow more diverse candidates to enter the police force?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Yes, certainly, I think that it does, and I think—I know you wanted a yes or no, but it actually goes a step further—it removes a barrier for folks who are coming from marginalized communities, who, based on their socio-economic situation, when they finish high school, don't have the ability to go to post-secondary and they go directly into the workforce. As the chief said—and that's my understanding, as well—the average recruit age at the Ontario Police College is well into the twenties; it might even be 29. Later into their life, when they've worked for a number of years after high school, acquired all kinds of life experience, all kinds of other skills from being in the workforce, now we've removed a potential barrier where they'd then have to go to school or find a way to go to school just so that they could become a police officer. We want to cast as wide a net as possible when we're recruiting potential police officers, and that would really put a big barrier on that net.

Mr. Steve Bell: I've spoken the most, so I'll say yes.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Jones, please.

Mr. Trevor Jones: Through you, Chair: I want to highlight something the chief said earlier in his discussion, and that was that policing as a career truly is a lifelong, career-long learning journey.

I think it's important to understand how the framework of the Ontario Police College works as a post-higher institution. If you bring tremendous value in your lived experience to the profession, that one diploma or degree—a piece of paper—shouldn't restrict or permit someone and shouldn't be a barrier to meaningful employment when those life skills can be so transferable and so relevant. As a young police leader, I learned that. Maybe it's anecdotal, but I've supervised hundreds of police officers over my career, and

I'll tell you candidly that some of the best police officers came from the community, from trades, from small communities without access to formal education. A sheet metal worker, a local contractor, a small business owner—some of the most exceptional and award-winning and caring community police officers I've ever had the pleasure and privilege to work with.

To continue on that theme of breaking down barriers: You discussed briefly about how your candidates come from the community as mentors and coaches and active community members, and that school resource officer component is really a bridge to that.

A wise older sergeant told me in my first week of policing, "Don't let a call to a school be the first time you engage with students and staff in a school setting. Don't let it be an emergent situation. Continue to build down those barriers—because, individually, you may have coached some of those kids, mentored them, maybe even taught them something in Scouting or some other setting. Don't let that emergency call for service be the first time you engage there, because it's triggering; it's traumatizing; it's chaotic, and it can be upsetting."

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So to carry on with that conversation, I would like to know what the PAO and President Baxter feel—because I think Chief Bell said that quite eloquently. Staffing the Ottawa Police Service, which can be—it's a bigger service, with lots of opportunities. It's a big city. It draws from a bigger swath of the province, whereas President Baxter represents small, large and medium-sized police services across Ontario—28,000 sworn members and civilians. What are your services telling you is your best opportunity to attract, train and retain quality young people or mid-career people into the noble profession of policing? And do you think this legislation contributes toward that opportunity you have for your members?

Mr. Mark Baxter: Yes, the opportunity to recruit—this legislation would put some barriers in place, to recruit people who are specifically coming from a secondary employment. I think we get some really great police candidates who choose policing as a second career, when their first career perhaps didn't include some post-secondary education. This barrier would really eliminate a large pool of potential recruits.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Further questions? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): You have two minutes, 30 seconds.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Okay.

Thank you to both of you for your presentations today. You've both spoken quite passionately about community policing, and we know that this act is designed to help implement the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019. At the time, I was in the municipal sector, so we went through our community wellness and safety plans, implementing that through the police services board, to try to look at ways that we could augment and provide the best service to our

residents. The discussion becomes, then, the community-based aspect to it.

You've talked about building bridges and understanding the various components and having a force that reflects the community, so I'm just wondering if you can talk to us a bit about how you see this act enhancing your abilities to provide policing in a community-based way, and also about any suggestions you might have so that we can, working forward, help you to make sure that the types of services you provide are community-sensitive.

Mr. Steve Bell: Through the Chair: Thank you for the question.

I think where it starts for us, in terms of building community policing, is that it removes the barriers, so it lets us bring a broader, more diverse pool of people into our organization. I absolutely think the act helps support that. We will share the thought that every officer is a community police officer, and—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): One minute.

Mr. Steve Bell: One of the important things around the school resource officer program, specifically, is that in Ottawa, we were part of what I would actually call the original community safety and well-being model of delivery. You had social workers, you had mental health and addictions workers, you had psychologists, you had people who helped advocate for jobs—you had a true community safety and well-being environment within a school. The police are part of that, and when we removed access to those resources for our young people and we removed policing from schools—I think we've taken what was the model of community safety and well-being and stricken it at the same time that we're trying to build exactly that model across our cities and across our communities.

Mr. Mark Baxter: I was a school resource officer for three years in Brantford, and at both of my schools, I shared an office with a social worker and the child and youth worker. I had two high schools—I was there every other day—but the three of us shared the same office, and the reason was because often so much of the work that we were doing was connected to each other. Removing one piece of that puzzle—we've got students who are at risk, who we know relied on the services or the counselling or the advice that the police could give them.

Removing police from schools is something that I'm very passionate about. I became a police officer because of the high school resource officer, the impact that he had on me as a high school student. Brantford, the community that I come from, was the first community in Ontario to implement the school resource officer program in the early 1990s. When I was a grade 12 student, we started the program at my high school. That officer had such an impact on me; it steered me to a career in policing.

We've got to get back to having police in schools. The school resource officer program is so important—but particularly our young students, as well. We have to teach our young students and our kids at a young age that police are community helpers; that if you're hurt, lost or scared, a police officer is someone you can go to, who you can trust and who's going to help you.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That concludes all the time that we have.

At this point, I'd like to thank both of our presenters, President Baxter and Chief Bell, for joining us here today.

This concludes our public hearings on Bill 102.

As a reminder, the deadline to send in a written submission will be 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, which is today. The deadline for filing amendments to the bill will be 5 p.m. on Friday, May 19, 2023.

MPP Stevens, I believe you would like to raise something?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to move that the meeting for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare, scheduled for Thursday, May 25, 2023, be cancelled and rescheduled to Thursday, June 1, 2023, 9 to 10:15 a.m., 1 to 6 p.m. and 6:30 to midnight. The reason is because—

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Sorry; I just have to say something.

MPP Stevens has moved a motion. Is there any debate? MPP Stevens?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Sorry about that. Actually, I just want to explain why.

I know it's very important that we meet on constituency week, next week, with our constituents. Some of us have to travel quite a distance back into Toronto, but it is important that we meet with our constituents as well as do the business at Queen's Park. However, I feel that it's pretty important that next week we reschedule for June 1, which I know that this committee is not meeting on.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): MPP Stevens has moved a motion. All those in favour, please raise their hands. All those opposed?

Mr. Stephen Blais: We're not going to have debate?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Oh, sorry. You still wanted to debate?

Mr. Stephen Blais: She finished, and you called the vote.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): My apologies.

Further debate? MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Whether the meeting is the 1st or any other day that week, I have to agree; constituency week is meant for—

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Committee members, I can't hear MPP Blais.

Mr. Stephen Blais: Constituency week is meant for us to be in our constituencies, meeting with local residents, meeting with local police officials, community safety advocates, others who might be able to help keep us abreast of what's happening back home. I can't speak for everyone here but, Madam Chair, as you know, travelling to and from Ottawa is a seven-hour return trip. It's an entire business day lost just travelling here to Toronto.

Without belabouring the point, especially given that the standing orders do not allow for video conferencing—we allow witnesses to appear by video. I think if we wanted to meet during constituency weeks, if the video conferencing option was there, then that would be appropriate and acceptable. But the travel to and from Toronto makes it difficult to properly engage with our constituents when we're scheduled to be there.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Is there further debate? MPP Saunderson.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: The concern from this side of the floor is that we're coming up against the summer recess, and we want to make sure this report gets back to the House so that we can deal with the legislation before we rise.

I'm wondering if we can get any indication—the week delay, is that going to impact that timeline?

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): That would be something for the government House leader's office to determine, but I'm assuming there would probably be a delay.

Interjections.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Yes. Is there any further debate? MPP Stevens.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Just to reiterate what I was saying earlier—it is very important that we do get back to our constituents and we do meet with our constituents within our ridings as well as that we do the business here at Queen's Park. The end of this session is June 8. If I can be corrected, if anybody can enlighten me that it's going to be earlier—but June 8, and I'm asking for June 1.

The Chair (Ms. Goldie Ghamari): Is there any further debate? No?

MPP Stevens has moved a motion. All those in favour, please raise their hands. All those opposed? I declare the motion lost.

There being no further business, the committee is now adjourned until 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 25, 2023, for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 102.

The committee adjourned at 1401.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Chair / Présidente

Ms. Goldie Ghamari (Carleton PC)

Vice-Chair / Vice-Président

Mr. Sol Mamakwa (Kiiwetinoong ND)

Mr. Robert Bailey (Sarnia–Lambton PC)

Mr. Stephen Blais (Orléans L)

Mr. Lorne Coe (Whitby PC)

Ms. Jess Dixon (Kitchener South–Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud–Hespeler PC)

Ms. Goldie Ghamari (Carleton PC)

Ms. Christine Hogarth (Etobicoke–Lakeshore PC)

Mr. Trevor Jones (Chatham-Kent–Leamington PC)

Ms. Natalia Kusendova-Bashta (Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre PC)

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Mr. Brian Saunderson (Simcoe–Grey PC)

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