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Standing Committee on Justice Policy

Protecting Ontario's Streets
and Communities Act, 2026

1st Session
44th Parliament
Monday 5 October 2026

Comité permanent de la justice

Loi de 2026 visant à protéger
les rues et les collectivités
de l'Ontario

1^{re} session
44^e législature
Lundi 5 octobre 2026

Chair: Lorne Coe
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Lorne Coe
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICYCOMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA JUSTICE

Monday 5 October 2026

Lundi 5 octobre 2026

*The committee met at 1000 in committee room 2.*PROTECTING ONTARIO'S STREETS
AND COMMUNITIES ACT, 2026
LOI DE 2026 VISANT À PROTÉGER
LES RUES ET LES COLLECTIVITÉS
DE L'ONTARIO

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts / Projet de loi 119, Loi édictant deux nouvelles lois et modifiant diverses autres lois.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Justice Policy will now come to order. We're meeting today to conduct public hearings on Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts.

MINISTRY OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I will now call on the Honourable Michael Kerzner, the Solicitor General of Ontario, as the committee's first witness.

Minister, you will have up to 20 minutes for your presentation, followed by 39 minutes of questions from the members of the committee. The questions will be divided into two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the third party.

Solicitor General, the floor is yours, sir. Please begin.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm delighted to be here and to talk about Bill 119, which was our spring justice bill, the Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act, 2026. I'm very grateful to the committee members for taking the time out of their day so we can be here together.

Let me give some context of why Bill 119 was debated in the Legislature prior to coming to committee—and I'm grateful for the work that the committee will do next to make sure that they meet with their stakeholders and people that want to give deputations and why it's important.

Slightly over four years ago, in June 2022, when I took the oath to be honoured to be the Solicitor General for Ontario, I took it with great personal pride that the fundamental rights that we have in Ontario to our public safety are equal. It doesn't matter whether our background was privileged or not. It doesn't matter where our families

came from or not, or how they got here. It doesn't matter what language we speak. It doesn't matter the faith we observe. It doesn't matter the people that we love. The fundamental rights that we all have to enjoy public safety, to enjoy the simple rights of going about our daily lives—and I've spoken about this, Mr. Chair. I've spoken about seeing our kids off to school, saying goodbye to our spouses, checking in on our seniors, going to work, shopping, playing in the park, worshipping. These umbilical rights that we have are equal. It is up to a government to make sure that they are fulfilled. That's our responsibility. And, fall and spring, our government has come forward with pieces of justice and public safety legislation that seizes the moment to ensure that these fundamental rights we have meet the times that we are in.

I want to speak, as part of Bill 119, to some of the successes that we have had as a result of the work that this committee has done and the Legislature has done. We came forward to say we need more people to seek a career in public safety. I want to speak for a minute on that. Earlier this morning, I attended the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association health and safety conference. It's remarkable, the level of interest in people who want to be first responders, who want to be firefighters.

Members opposite—my friend from St. Catharines—know that I am a great champion of our fire services. Their jobs are not easy. Our government moved the needle in many respects by doing things that governments of the past didn't do. We made amends. We paid the debts that we owed our firefighters. And I think it has gone a long way across the aisle that we all agree how hard our firefighters work and how important our fire services are.

On the public safety side also, we look to our police services: our OPP, a flagship provincial police service anywhere in the country; municipal, First Nations police services—these police services told us we need more people to be police officers, so we changed the tone and attitude of our government by saying that nothing is more important than their welfare and safety.

We came forward with bold initiatives to change how we approach our recruitment and what the role of the Ontario Police College is. We came forward with investments. It's actually over \$34 million a year because we absorbed the tuition of over 2,000 individuals to go through the college. It means that for the members around this table, in their municipal, OPP and First Nations police services, there are people that are coming forward to serve.

That historic investment has basically doubled the amount of people going through the college just in the last four years. It means in the time that I've been Solicitor General, we've welcomed 8,000 new individuals who have been badged to serve as our police officers. That is absolutely without precedent.

We realize that as our population grows, we have to modernize our correctional system as well. We have to make the investments—we have to make the investments in the facilities we have; we have to be creative in the facilities we aspire to build; we have to be transparent where the new spaces will come online. I think our government, led by the Premier, has done a great job, and we've been very transparent. We have more work to do, but the almost 2,500 new spaces that will be brought online will make a big difference, and I'm really pleased about that. That represents about a 24% increase over the next decade.

We came forward in introducing important legislation like the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, the Enhancing Access to Justice Act, the Protect Ontario Through Safer Streets and Stronger Communities Act and the Keeping Criminals Behind Bars Act, and we're considering more.

One of the things that's very important—and I think you will agree, Mr. Chair—is strengthening the governance and transparency of police service boards and ensuring we can set clear priorities. Bill 119 is the first opportunity we have had to talk about this. This means that a police service board will be able to understand what are the priorities of the government, not to work in isolation of what local priorities are within the communities but to understand what is the focus. If our focus, as an example, is cracking down hard on people that are stealing our cars and breaking into our homes at 3 in the morning, if our priorities are getting drugs off the street, combatting hate and getting illegal guns off our street, then the least a government should be able to do is to confer and to communicate these priorities. I'm pleased that Bill 119 speaks to that.

We're modernizing the oversight and training for private security guards. We have to look back at how many years did a government bother looking at this, and maybe there were reasons why they didn't do it in the past. I think it's important now. We see people come forward who want to be employed as a security guard but with little training, with little standards that are equal across the system. By modernizing the oversight, because it's the oversight as well—it's not just the training; it's the oversight—we'll make sure that our population sees people who are wearing a security guard vest, understanding that there is better streamlining of training.

Especially now, especially when our country and the world doesn't feel as safe as it once did, especially now, when we see an unprecedented rise of hate that's affecting many communities, including my own Jewish community, we have to look at what levers does a government have to look at what exists today. Security guards exist today. I think this is important, that we're going to look at this.

We're also looking and addressing—and I've spoken about this, Mr. Chair—the security risks for what potentially lies with the Chinese-made drones—what security risks might lie there. So we want to explore restricting future government purchases of Chinese-made drones. This will not impact public safety today, but it will migrate us to do two things: number one, take pride in what Ontario is able to manufacture and to create and innovate—that's number one—and number two, look at what Canada can do. Ontario, Canada—we have a lot of talent here, and this is important.

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I want to talk also about strengthening enforcement. Let me speak for a minute about illegal drugs. We want to stop illegal drugs at their source. This bill will help address the unlawful possession of precursor chemicals and equipment like pill presses with the intention of producing illicit drugs. This is important.

We know that the precursor chemicals are coming into our province. We know people are making this. We have to crack down hard on this. And we have to hold commercial landlords accountable for knowingly permitting their premises to be used for illegal drug production. That's important too. You can't hide behind the veil when you know but you're not owning up to the fact that this is wrong. I'm happy about this.

We're enabling special constables to stop dangerous drug use and other dangerous behaviour that sometimes follow illicit drug use on public transit. We had a great announcement. Yep, it happened to be in my own constituency of York Centre, because I am one of the few members of provincial Parliament that happens to have a GO stop and three subway stops right in my own little nook, in one little corner between Wilson and Sheppard, running off Dufferin and Wilson Heights. It's quite remarkable. It's right where Downsview Park is.

It's important that we send a message to the public that somebody's on their side. This government, not acting exclusively—because I respect the will of the Legislature; I respect the voices from my colleagues on all sides, but the concept that somebody has to be there to help an average person and have their back is what drives me every day.

Even on Bill 119, Mr. Chair, we're talking about towing. That's very important, because we know there's predatory towing operators that prey on drivers in distress, positioning themselves near collision sites and sometimes driving dangerously. So we're making it easier to enforce penalties against tow truck companies.

I want to say, Mr. Chair, that there are very legitimate tow operators in Ontario, and I've spoken to them. This is not about them; we're talking about bad actors and predators.

We also want to analyze something that Ontarians have said is a problem—the towing and storage rates—so that we can establish a maximum rate, so that a breakdown on the highway does not turn into a financial disaster. Unfortunately, as a father of a daughter, that happened to us,

and it's something that may have happened to you. We're going to examine that.

I want to talk about organized retail theft, because we know this is increasing. I had a meeting in the summer with executives from Home Depot. I was really floored by the stories that they told me about the brazenness of individuals that will come into a store, look for expensive items in Home Depot—we're not talking about sheets of drywall or plywood, but we're talking about drill bits; we're talking about pieces of equipment that have substantial value—and they're just taking it out and walking it out of the store. This endangers the staff and customers. That's why we want to establish a dedicated prosecution team, building on the success of similar specialized prosecution teams we've created.

Bill 119 helps us re-examine Christopher's Law. It's passionate to all of us. It goes back to the time when Premier Harris was Premier. It goes back to the story of young, beautiful Christopher Stephenson. Some of us had met his family not that long ago. It is overwhelming. We cannot understand how they can go forward, day after day, knowing the tragedy of what happened to their son, that somebody murdered their son. So we're strengthening Christopher's Law and protecting the most vulnerable people in our society, our own children, by making some information available on public websites so that parents and families can better protect their children.

Other measures include the fact that, just as we're looking at protecting the vulnerable people, we want to make sure that police record checks—which are very important—the vulnerable sector checks and police record checks are done in a proper timeline that allows somebody who may want to work in a long-term-care home or be a camp counsellor to get it in a reasonable time and not jeopardize their ability to seek their job.

We came forward, actually, with an announcement that I think is beautiful. It allows police services, through a memorandum of understanding, one to another, through the different services, to help alleviate a backlog that may exist. It means that a police service would be able to do the background work from another service even if you are not in jurisdiction.

We must protect the vulnerable. We're making it easier to enforce restraining orders issued in Canada but outside of Ontario. We're cracking down on harassment by enabling victims to pursue damages in civil court even where there hasn't been a criminal conviction. And of course—and this is personal to all of us—we want to help relieve victims of human trafficking from debt that was forced on them by their traffickers.

We're strengthening protections for individuals accompanied by guide dogs and continue supporting Indigenous-led safety initiatives through the renewed Pathways to Safety strategy.

Friends, members, colleagues, Mr. Chair, this bill is not our first step to protect Ontario, and it won't be our last step. We will continue to work, to meet with our stakeholders, to look at the times that find us. The role of a government must be responsive to the times that we are in.

It was very interesting going back to Christopher Stephenson's family. It's a long time ago, but when you met his family—the member from Thornhill was there that day, other members from the Legislature were there that day in Peel. We live in the moment as elected officials to represent our constituencies everywhere in Ontario, but when we have these moments in time, we can't forget about it, pay our respects and move on. We have to stop and be prepared to take action.

Bill 119 is an example—it's a thoughtful example of working collaboratively, of seeking debate in the Legislature, of coming here to the justice policy committee, of listening to the people that will make deputations and understanding that we have to be innovative, we have to be creative.

Yes, it's true: The role of Parliament is not easy. In many respects, sometimes, it feels like you're in an aircraft carrier. It's hard to position this large vessel to turn and to make things happen. But things can happen.

Premier Ford is a leader who believes that our role in government is to make things happen—and it's to work with some incredible people in the ministry. I'm sitting beside one of the finest career police officers and leaders who has been our Deputy Solicitor General for public safety for quite a period of time, Mario Di Tommaso. I'm grateful that we have Deputy Solicitor General for corrections Erin Hannah. I'm grateful that behind them there are assistant deputy ministers and other leaders within our ministry.

When we're tasking them to come forward and help develop policies on items that we need to bring forward as legislators, we do it with the confidence in the professional standards they uphold. I've got great confidence in the incredible team that I am blessed to have all these years. Throughout my entire time as Solicitor General, on the public safety side, we've had Deputy Di Tommaso.

I believe that there's more work to do. I believe that if a government stops and takes a breath and takes a breather, we're forgoing what our public has asked us to do.

When we came forward just a week ago in the riding of Durham—Mr. Chair, you're a proud MPP from Durham and Whitby—we saw a helicopter be branded with the Durham Regional Police Service identity. That helicopter is another example of a government that won't sit idly by, that's always on the move, that's creative and innovative and imaginative. That helicopter, part of the joint air support unit—it's an over \$190-million investment that will integrate the groundwork, the excellent groundwork, that our police services do with now having the air support. When a car is stolen, it's not going to stay in a jurisdiction just because it's the jurisdiction of a specific police service. It will go wherever that criminal takes it. That was an excellent example of a government working together.

1020

We've had other excellent examples where governments have come forward by changing the legislation and the regulations—the attitude, the tone, the expectation—to work collaboratively.

I'll tell you, Mr. Chair, when the member from Hamilton Mountain—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Minister, that concludes the amount of time you have for your delegation.

Some of the other examples that you were about to share with the committee members, you might want to consider weaving them into your responses to the questions which you're about to start with the official opposition.

Just as a reminder, you have 6.5 minutes for each round. The Clerk is the timekeeper, so I'll let you know when you have one minute remaining in your round of questions.

We'll start now with the questions, please, for the official opposition.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Well, thank you—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Stevens, maybe just put your hand up when you want to ask a question. That would be good. Thank you.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning to you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good morning.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: And good morning, Solicitor General. I want to thank you for your presentation this morning on Bill 119, or the bill to amend and amend and amend.

However, Solicitor General, Bill 119 has been presented in the past as a public safety bill, but when I look closely at the 17 schedules in this omnibus bill, we see a collection of very different measures—some technical, some supportable and some raising significant questions about accountability and government outreach, I feel.

What we don't see is a comprehensive response to public safety challenges Ontarians are actually facing today. In my home community in St. Catharines, as in communities right across Ontario, people are concerned about crime, they're concerned about the opioid crisis, fentanyl on the rise, court delays, retail theft and whether victims can get help when they actually need it. So what I want to focus my questions on is what this bill actually does and, importantly, what it does not do.

Solicitor General, in Bill 119, it gives you new powers to direct the priorities that police service boards must reflect in their strategic plans. As I said, in St. Catharines, residents expect their local police services and police service boards to understand the needs of our community. From downtown safety, property crime to the opioid crisis and the pressures facing front-line officers, communities across Ontario have their own unique public safety challenges.

Solicitor General, why does your government believe that you, the Solicitor General in Toronto, should have more powers to dictate local policing priorities, rather than working with our local police leaders and chiefs, police service boards in communities like St. Catharines, to determine what public safety should look like?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member for the question.

Firstly, and I think the member knows this, that as minister, I have an ability to consult with board members

on different boards. The reality is that what we want to do is align the priorities with uniformity across our municipal police service boards.

The member from St. Catharines knows; she has a flagship service, the Niagara Regional Police Service. She knows it's a great service. But I want to make sure, as an example with her board, that when we establish what our priorities are, it be included in that strategic plan in her example of the Niagara Regional Police Service board.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

Question, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Solicitor General, your government has made announcements about transit safety, retail theft and animal welfare alongside this bill. But those measures aren't actually contained in Bill 119. The proposed transit enforcement powers are being left up to regulation, from what we're seeing. The retail theft task force isn't established in this legislation, from what I'm reading and what others in the public are. And the broader restrictions on unnecessary animal procedures are also being left for regulation, once again.

I'm going to ask the minister, why should this committee accept the government's public safety claims about measures that aren't actually before us within Bill 119 or the amendments?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Thank you. I appreciate the question.

I'll ask the Deputy Solicitor General to speak to the mechanics and machinery. However, I was very, very clear that currently, the act does provide police officers and other provincial officers to direct individuals to stop using illegal substances on transit, as an example. What we wanted to do through this bill is authorize special constables at Metrolinx, at TTC and at OC Transpo to make sure that they have a further ability to keep our transit safe.

But I'll ask the Deputy Solicitor General to speak further.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, I need your full name for the record, please, sir.

Mr. Mario Di Tommaso: Good morning, Mr. Chair. My name is Mario Di Tommaso. I am the Deputy Solicitor General for community safety in the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): There's one minute left for questions from the opposition.

Go ahead, sir—your response.

Mr. Mario Di Tommaso: Thank you so much for the question. You did reference a couple of issues. One is the work that we are doing with regard to retail crime. I can assure you that we are engaging with the Retail Council of Canada to come back with options for the minister to consider, and that will be brought forward with regard to future legislation.

What Bill 119 does refer to is the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act amendments. One of the things that we are doing is we are enhancing record-keeping requirements, currently only in place for dogs. We're going to

extend that to cats and any other animal prescribed by the LGIC. We are giving us the regulatory-making authority to prescribe record-keeping for other animals as well, but currently we are extending it to cats.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Deputy.

You've got 14 seconds.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Can I ask what happens, Minister, if the drug user on the transit says no?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Well, the—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. That concludes the questions and answers for the official opposition.

We'll now turn, please, to the third party. MPP Collard.

Mme Lucille Collard: Thank you, Solicitor General, for being here this morning. I want to focus my questions on the provisions relating to human trafficking, the coerced debts. I don't know if you have somebody who has the expertise and can answer some pretty specific questions.

As you know, Bill 41 was passed unanimously by the Legislature back in December 2023, and survivors have been waiting for the implementation of these measures for almost three years now. So I'm really glad to see that the measures that were contained in my bill are now included in Bill 119, but I remain concerned about the implementation timeline. Can you give this committee a firm date by which the coerced debt protections in Bill 119 will actually be available to survivors?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Solicitor General, to the question, please, sir.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'll have to get back to the committee on that specific answer. But what I can tell you is—and I thank the member from Ottawa, because it's important and this is something that I spoke about in my opening remarks. When you think about it—that somebody could have been coerced into debt and have no mechanism to get rid of that debt that they were coerced into—it's completely unacceptable and this is why we've come forward.

I'll get back to the committee the date of the implementation.

1030

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Your commitment, sir, will be noted.

New question, please.

Mme Lucille Collard: As a follow-up to that regarding the process—which is now more elaborate under Bill 119 than what I had envisaged in Bill 41: It now considers a system that is definitely more legally comprehensive, but we don't want it to be practically inaccessible to the very survivors it is supposed to protect.

What kind of safeguards have you put in the bill to make sure that there is not an additional or too-complex burden for the survivors of coerced debts of human trafficking, to ensure that they have access to the mechanism that you will be implementing?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I'll just say that the part sets out the framework for establishing a coerced debt as well as related procedural preconditions and requirements, which may be supplemented by the regulations made under the part. At the end of the day, we want to make sure

that somebody is not shackled to a debt that they were coerced into incurring. That's the point. We will work expeditiously and with dispatch and we will be on the side of a vulnerable person who should not have been coerced in the first place.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir.

New question, please.

Mme Lucille Collard: Do you have any details about the evidence that survivors will actually be required to provide? How will you ensure that the regulations do not inadvertently re-create an excessively high evidentiary threshold?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: This is something that will be developed as part of the regulations and this is something that we will have to have studied. But at the end of the day, the point is the same: If a person has been coerced into debt, this is unfortunate; this is not right. That's why we're coming forward and I hope the member opposite will support it because it's important. We want to make sure that, if a vulnerable person has been coerced into debt, they have relief. This is what this does.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir.

New question, please.

Mme Lucille Collard: I want to make the emphasis on the implementation. I've been pretty much harassing the Attorney General for the last three years to implement those measures so that survivors can have access to the mechanism to unload this burden from their shoulders. Because you need to imagine that those vulnerable people who have been forced into debts that were not of their own are dealing with this, are being harassed themselves by creditors to get the money paid. Like you said, it is unacceptable, but we need to make sure that they get access to the mechanism. So I do hope that you will act swiftly in implementing these measures.

I just want to quickly speak to the fact that Bill 119 makes designated organizations central to the process so a survivor generally cannot simply initiate the adjudication process independently. Designated organizations and eligible referring organizations become important gateways. Minister, designated organizations will now carry significant responsibility for reviewing coerced debts and supporting survivors through this process.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute remaining for questions.

Mme Lucille Collard: So how many organizations do you expect to designate? How will they be distributed geographically across Ontario? What funding will be available? And will you have services in French as well?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please. Thank you.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I think the member's comments were fair. We will consider the number of organizations—and, yes, we are a province that is bilingual. This is something that we will have to do and this is something that we will do to make sure that we have both English- and French-speaking organizations that can assist the vulnerable people who have been coerced into debt.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for the response.

Madame Collard, you've got 12 seconds.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'm just going to leave that question with you, then. Will you consider also people who have already paid their debts? Because they've been waiting; they've been promised that measure for the last three years and—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

I am moving now to the government side. MPP Allsopp, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you, Solicitor General, for being with us this morning.

I want to start, before I ask you my question about strengthening community safety, by offering my thanks on behalf of everyone in Belleville and the Bay of Quinte for your office and for your support following the horrific anti-Semitic attacks on the Sons of Jacob synagogue a few weeks ago. Not only were you able to spend a couple of days with us—and your office as well—but it meant a lot to our local Jewish community; to our local police and community officers Mike McCurdy and Jeff Smith, who are still recovering; and to local leadership as well that you were there and that your office was there supporting us through what was an unprecedented attack for us. So thank you very much for being there, sir.

Bill 119, Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act, 2026, reflects the government's ongoing efforts to respond to concerns raised by communities about crime, public disorder, illegal drugs and victimization. Many Ontarians are looking for practical measures that will help law enforcement and public safety partners address emerging threats while maintaining public confidence in the justice system. Through this legislation, the government is proposing a number of new tools and authorities intended to improve safety outcomes across our province.

Could the Solicitor General please outline the overarching objectives of Bill 119 and explain how its various components work together to make Ontario communities safer for families, for businesses and for our vulnerable residents?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, sir, please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: To my friend from the Bay of Quinte, thank you for your leadership in the last few weeks in what was a very difficult, difficult time. When we look at the fact that what could have happened at the Sons of Jacob was a massacre of incredible proportion, it was through nothing short of the incredible work of the Belleville Police Service, the community and divine intervention that things did not unfold into a massacre.

I think Bill 119 talks about the risks that communities face every day, whether it be standing on the side of an innocent individual and a community; whether it combats further human trafficking and harassment; whether it sends a message—don't use our province to make illegal drugs; whether it means holding people responsible, like landlords; whether it sends a message to people on public

transit—don't behave badly because we are a law-abiding community.

Bill 119 is another example of a government led by Premier Ford that has prioritized our public safety and has gone to a place that no other government has gone prior in its seriousness, its tone and its action.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question: MPP Ciriello, please.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Thank you, Minister. I'm incredibly proud of the work that our government has done to ensure that Ontario remains to be recognized as a leader when it comes to human trafficking. I must say that's no doubt due to your leadership as Solicitor General. I hear it in my home riding of Hamilton Mountain; I hear it across the province wherever I am, the incredible work that you are doing in leading this.

We know with human trafficking, there's always more to do. We want to ensure that survivors are supported to take steps when they rebuild their lives.

One of the measures proposed in Bill 119 would strengthen protections for victims who are coerced into taking on those debts. This recognizes a long-term financial harm that trafficking survivors often face even if they have escaped their traffickers.

Could you expand and perhaps explain how the bill's debt protection measures are going to continue or would assist survivors of human trafficking?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: To my friend from Hamilton, our government is strengthening the response to coerced debt and to support survivors. Yes, it's true—and the member knows this; these discussions have been around the floor of the Legislature for a very long time—we want to make sure that we find the missing pieces of the link.

This is also a MAG co-opted conversation, and I want to acknowledge my colleague the Attorney General. We have to look at the fact that people who are survivors of human trafficking may have been coerced to incur debt, and this is absolutely of great concern.

The whole premise behind what we want to do in Bill 119 is include organizations that will help work alongside the victims and find a pathway forward where they can get relief. It's something that I think is personal to all of us. I feel that now more than ever, our government must find the missing links that we need to finish this puzzle and put it into action, and that's what we're going to do.

1040

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. MPP Gualtieri: You have one minute left for this question and a response.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: I am pleased today to address the Honourable Minister Kerzner and the Deputy Solicitor General Mario Di Tommaso, also working alongside the ministry and all the ministry staff. I am proud to be with this ministry, because we stress and promote the fundamental rights and safety and justice for all, and the pride and the respect that we have for our first responders.

So, Minister, communities across Ontario continue to experience the devastating impacts of illicit drugs and

criminal networks responsible for their production and distribution. Law enforcement agencies have indicated that access to equipment such as pill presses and precursor chemicals plays an important role in the illegal drug trade. Bill 119 proposes new restrictions and enforcement tools aimed at disrupting these activities before harmful substances reach Ontarians.

Could the Solicitor General elaborate on how the proposed measures targeting pill presses, precursor chemicals—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Excuse me. The one minute has elapsed.

We're starting our second round of questions with the official opposition, and we're going to start with MPP Wong-Tam. Good morning.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Good morning, and thank you to the Solicitor General for being here today.

Solicitor General, in your previous reply to MPP Stevens, you suggested that the transit police could direct someone or ask someone to stop consuming the illegal substance if they're doing so on transit. Beyond the polite request or even a direction to stop consuming those drugs on public transit, what other authorities or powers have you granted those officers?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I would ask our Deputy Solicitor General to elaborate further.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy, please. Thank you.

Mr. Mario Di Tommaso: Although those powers are not part of Bill 119, in the past what this government has decided to do through legislation is ensure that the special constables that are employed for the purposes of enforcing transit—for example, the special constables at the TTC—do have the ability to take enforcement action when it comes to the use of drugs on subway cars in order to keep the public safe.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for the response.

New question, please.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, and thank you for the clarification that there is nothing in Bill 119 that gives those transit police more powers to enforce illicit drug use on public transit.

I want to just follow up regarding an issue that was touched upon by MPP Stevens, and that is regarding the new powers that the Solicitor General will be granting himself in Bill 119. This is specifically the power to issue a binding directive to police service boards to set certain priorities that will then have to be written into the local police board's strategic plan.

Does the Solicitor General believe he doesn't have enough power over local police service boards right now?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Solicitor General, to the question please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I believe some police service boards across our province have been disingenuous. We've had situations—and we have it now, just before province-wide municipal elections, where candidates have come forward to say, "Vote for me. I'll teach the police a

lesson. I'll cut their budgets if you elect me. I will do this. I will do that."

What we want to make sure of is, for the hard-working board members that have served on police service boards, that there is a better alignment of the provincial priorities. I think that's important. Because remember, it's not to direct a police service; it is to make sure that their strategic plan is in alignment with provincial priorities.

I gave examples, Mr. Chair. If that is fighting to get more drugs off our street, to combatting hate—

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Sorry—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Solicitor General.

New question, please.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes, thank you very much.

Solicitor General, which specific police service boards do you believe are disingenuous in their comments with the public? Can you be specific?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: No, Mr. Chair, I will simply say that over the history of a board's life, through the life of our province, there have been board members on police boards at different times and places that have not aligned the priorities of their board to the priorities of the government of the day. This is just saying, "Okay, we are going to align it."

I'll give you an example. If we have, as in Toronto, a tremendous rise of hate and protest, then the focus of the board must include, in their strategic plan, a way of providing the resources for the public order unit. They have done that, as an example. But there may be a time and place where that does not happen. This is allowing the minister of the day to make sure that the priorities of the government are communicated to the board for their strategic plan.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir, for that response.

New question, please.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Solicitor General.

I think that the issue that you are raising in Toronto, I believe—because you wrote a letter to the Toronto police chief, Myron Demkiw, as well as the police service board, back in December 2025. You criticized them and cited that they lacked enforcement regarding hate-motivated offences. You cited that that they did not move quickly enough on intimidation or harassment tactics during certain protests.

The police service leadership, as well as the chair, pushed back against your criticism and your letter. They noted that officers had already managed over 800 demonstrations, leading to 500 arrests and over 1,000 criminal charges over a two-year period, and that they're operating under legal thresholds and that the charter also has some purview over here, obviously a broad-standing purview.

The province of Ontario does not have a stand-alone anti-hate strategy. We have strategies regarding anti-racism; why does the province of Ontario not have a stand-alone anti-hate strategy?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Firstly, Mr. Chair, I stand by the letter I sent the chief. And, by the way, I'm very respectful to my chief. I'm very, very supportive of my chief and my police service here in Toronto—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute left. To the question.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: But we will evolve. We will continue to evolve.

I think that aligning the provincial priorities to the strategic plan of a police service board is a good idea. We're not telling them how to direct their chief or command leaders. We're saying, "These are the concerns of our government."

To the member's point, we will continue to evolve. We will continue to provide grants. We will continue to support the Community Safety and Policing Grant as a major funding mechanism to allow police services across the province—last year, it was over \$200 million; it's quite a bit higher than that to support our police services.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 13 seconds left.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The local police boards failing to comply with your directives, Minister—you can direct them. You can force them to sit in front of the inspector general—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. Your time is elapsed.

I'll move now, please, for questions, to the third party. MPP McCrimmon, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you to the minister for being here today.

Bill 119 expands enforcement authority involving special constables and transit enforcement, but it also adjusts the SIU regime.

Let's start with this: How far do we go giving special constable powers before they are actually, effectively, becoming police officers?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please, sir.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Special constables have a role to play, but they are not police officers. A police officer is somebody who goes to the Ontario Police College and is completing the basic constable training. However, as we have come forward with the CSPA, special constables actually have had different enhanced roles: to safeguard the scene of an accident, to assist in helping investigators preserve the evidence at a crime scene—so they continue to play important roles.

But I'm sure my friend opposite and I really respect the OC Transpo and how hard the men and women work in Ottawa and in her community—that we have people on our transit, let's face it, that behave badly. That's not right. This will send a message that if you behave badly, then you will be asked to cease and desist, get off the train or the bus, and this is why it's Metrolinx, OC Transpo and right here in Toronto. And this is what's important.

1050

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: So we're expanding arrest powers, enforcement powers and potentially allowing them to carry firearms, but they won't have the effective public accountability and the protections that actually come with policing. I don't understand—and then when you add to that the SIU changes, that a politician could decide to exempt certain officials from the SIU requirements, how are we actually helping civilian oversight of the police by doing these two things together?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Just to correct the member opposite, there is no contemplation right now that a special constable will be carrying a weapon. I would just want to clarify this. This was never talked about; that's not the case.

What we're saying is that a special constable on transit will have additional instructions to ask a person to cease and desist, to call the authorities, to remove that individual from transit and to preserve the safety of the passengers who are on it. This does not speak about providing them weapons.

To the SIU point, I'll ask the Deputy Solicitor General to answer the member's question on that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister, please. Thank you.

Mr. Mario Di Tommaso: One of the things that Bill 119 does is it also will expand the ability of the Special Investigations Unit to include other agencies under its umbrella. For example, it will have regulation-making authority to include other agencies such as the Niagara Parks special constable police to be able to come under the umbrella of the Special Investigations Unit and of the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency as well. So there's additional regulation-making authority to bring other agencies under that oversight model as well.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: But the act actually allows politicians to exempt certain officials from the SIU oversight act. That's what schedule 14 says. That's something that I don't think politicians should be making that decision on. Can you comment?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Deputy Minister.

Mr. Mario Di Tommaso: I don't know whether or not "officials" is defined under Bill 119. I would have to get back to you. My apologies.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It's not defined and I think that's the danger.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Right now, the Information and Privacy Commissioner called for amendments to Bill 119 to protect the rights that you addressed when you first spoke with us this morning. Will you be including those amendments in Bill 119?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Mr. Chair, we will continue to listen to the deliberations of this committee because there are deputations that are coming after me. We're going to continue to read what they said, and we'll let the committee do its work. This is a committee; it's here to do its work.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We have one minute remaining for questions. New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: On October 1, you got a letter from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, so this should already have been committed. This should have already been discussed in the ministry so you should really have an answer for me.

The second question, then, is drones. Can you point to me where in the bill it outlines restrictions on Chinese drones?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: There's no specific restrictions in this bill on Chinese drones. I spoke to a narrative that we want to ensure that we support our local innovators and entrepreneurs here in our province. We should be using Ontario products. That's why we buy from Ontario. That's why the directive from our government is support jobs in Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir, for that response.

We will move now to the government with MPP Darouze, please, sir.

MPP George Darouze: Good morning, Chair, and thank you very much. Through you, Mr. Chair, on your special day, on your birthday—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

MPP George Darouze:—I would like to give the opportunity to the Solicitor General to answer the question from my colleague Sylvia concerning the comparing of illegal drugs and organized crime.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question from the member from Carleton. I know it is something of a priority for him, just to converse with his constituents. The reality is we're seeing it happen. We're seeing precursor chemicals come into our province, people turn them into deadly fentanyl, it circulates throughout our communities, it goes to northern Ontario, it goes to First Nations communities, it kills people. What we want to do is basically cut the neck off of the snake so that we stop it at the beginning, and we don't know where this could happen next.

I have to say to the member from Carleton, when we think that these pill presses exist somewhere, they exist sometimes in commercial premises, and they hide under an aegis of a legitimate business when they're not. That's why we have to hold the landlords accountable and that's exactly what we're doing.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please.

MPP George Darouze: I want to thank the Solicitor General this morning for being here. I know that we, in Ottawa, appreciate the support that you bring and support our front-line services, especially our Ottawa fire services and our police services. I know that Chief Hutt and Chief Stubbs, they appreciate the support you give them and your regular visits to Ottawa to make sure that we are able to serve our residents and community on public safety.

That leads me to my question, which is: Our officials often face difficult decisions when balancing community awareness with privacy considerations in cases involving high-risk offenders. Bill 119 proposes measures that would allow information already subject to community notification to be available through a provincial public website. Many residents may view this as a way to improve access to important public safety information while supporting informed decision-making by families and communities.

Could the Solicitor General please explain the rationale behind this proposal and how the new framework would help increase public awareness, promote transparency and enhance community safety across our communities and in Ontario?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Let me give some context to the member from Carleton. Currently, information about high-risk offenders is often only available through individual police service websites or social media posts. These notifications may be missed by members of the community and result in inconsistent localized messaging with no single reliable place to access this information. A public-facing provincial website would ensure that everyone in Ontario has access to the same information in one searchable place. This proposed website would centralize information that is already publicly disclosed by the Ontario chiefs of police for the purpose of protection of the public. That's the context.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Solicitor General.

New question? MPP Sarrazin.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: How much time, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Oh, you've got lots of time—two minutes and 42 seconds.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you very much for being here today. I have to say, you already touched on this subject. It's about modernizing the police record checks. I know the bill proposed amendment to it. I would like, if it's possible, for the minister to explain these proposals. I know you've touched on it in your opening statement but maybe you want to elaborate on it.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: To my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell: Bill 119 proposes amendments to the Police Record Checks Reform Act that would modernize and improve the existing framework. Right now, a vulnerable sector check usually has to be processed by the police service where a person lives. If a police service has a backlog, then other police services cannot presently step in and help. This is very important and this leads to long waiting times.

The proposed changes would allow for qualified organizations approved by the Solicitor General to process vulnerable sector checks for people outside their local areas. This would reduce the backlog.

1100

At the end of the day, I use the example to my friend that if you want to be a counsellor at camp—my kids did

that at some point in time when they were a little younger—if you want to work in a long-term-care home, you have to have the surety that you're going to get the record check. And that's something that I think this addresses.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir.

You have one minute remaining. MPP Ciriello, please.

MPP Monica Ciriello: I'm going to pivot a little bit and talk about restraining orders. We know that harm and violence doesn't recognize provincial borders or jurisdictions. Bill 119 proposes changes that would allow restraining orders issued elsewhere in Canada to be enforceable in Ontario without requiring additional court proceedings.

Can you highlight how these amendments would benefit victims and vulnerable individuals as an important public safety measure?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: Yes. Very quickly, Mr. Chair, Bill 119 would allow restraining orders made in other provinces and territories to be enforced right here in Ontario automatically.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Right. Thank you for that response.

You have 23 seconds, but I don't know whether we'll get another opportunity to respond as fully as you have, Solicitor General.

Do you have a quick question? No. All right.

Thank you, Solicitor General, for your time. Deputy Minister, thank you very much for your time before us. We appreciate it very much.

That concludes the questioning for this round.

MR. ELI YUFEST

THE SALVATION ARMY

VICTIM SERVICES TORONTO

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We have other people before us coming in: Eli Yufest, and we have the Salvation Army and Carly Kalish, if you could please come forward to the table in front of me. Thank you. Members of the committee, you have one presenter joining us by video conference.

Welcome. Please get yourselves comfortable. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. For the record and for Hansard, if you could please introduce yourselves and then start your presentation.

Go ahead.

Ms. Carly Kalish: Good afternoon. My name is Carly Kalish. I am the CEO of Victim Services Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. We're going to start with EE-lai first.

Ms. Carly Kalish: Oh, sorry.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

Go ahead.

Mr. Eli Yufest: Just a quick note, it's actually EH-lee Yufest, though I still get EE-lai all the time. If I had a dollar for every time somebody called me EE-lai—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. Welcome.

Mr. Eli Yufest: Thank you for the opportunity to speak about Bill 119. My name is Eli Yufest. I'm here today not only as someone who cares deeply about public policy and community safety, but as a father and a member of Ontario's Jewish community.

There is much in this legislation that deserves serious consideration. Bill 119 addresses important public safety issues, including changes to policing, private security, human trafficking and community safety. That work matters. The laws cannot simply respond to the society we used to live in; they also have to respond to the realities of the society we live in today. And when it comes to protecting community institutions, synagogues, churches, mosques and community centres, I believe there is still an important gap.

My children attend a private Jewish school. Like every parent, when I send them to school, I want to only have to worry about whether they remembered their lunch, finished their homework or are going to have fun with their friends. I shouldn't have to send my children to school worrying whether they are safe and praying they come home at the end of the day. I shouldn't have to worry about whether somebody might target their school simply because it is a Jewish school. I shouldn't have to think about security at all.

But today, those worries are no longer hypothetical. Bais Chaya Mushka, a Jewish girls' elementary school here in Toronto, was fired upon three times in 2024. Think about that: A Jewish elementary school in Toronto was shot at three times in one year. Synagogues have been threatened. Jewish institutions have been vandalized and attacked. Members of our community have become accustomed to security guards, police vehicles, locked doors and security procedures simply to attend school, go to synagogue or participate in community life.

The statistics help explain why, in 2025, Statistics Canada recorded 788 police-reported hate crimes targeting Jewish Canadians, roughly 71% of all police-reported hate crimes motivated by religion in Canada that year, despite Jewish Canadians representing only about 1% of the country's population. Those are not numbers any society should accept.

Recent events have demonstrated what can happen when hatred moves from threats to violence. On September 20, 2026, a man armed with a shotgun approached the Sons of Jacob synagogue in Belleville while people were gathered for Yom Kippur. Constable Jeff Smith, who was stationed near the synagogue, exchanged gunfire with the attacker and was critically wounded. People were inside, observing the holiest day of the Jewish calendar; an armed man was outside and there was an armed police officer there who could respond—that matters. Think about what could have happened had there not been armed police at the synagogue.

We saw an even clearer example earlier this year at Temple Israel in Michigan. An armed attacker drove his vehicle into the synagogue while children and staff were inside. He entered the building armed with a rifle and a truck loaded with explosives. But that synagogue had

prepared for this possibility. They had invested in security, they had conducted active shooter training and, critically, they had armed professional security on site. A private, armed security guard engaged the attacker. Inside that building were 140 teachers, children and staff; not one of them was killed.

We cannot know exactly what would have happened had that armed security not been there, but we know an armed attacker had entered the building filled with children, and trained, armed security confronted him before he could carry out what could have become a mass casualty event. Had those professionals not been there, we could very easily have been talking about the murder of children on a horrific scale; instead, 140 children, teachers and staff went home. That is the difference armed security can make. Security is most effective if it is there before the attack happens, not when we decide after people have been murdered that perhaps there was a threat large enough that warranted it after all.

There is another inconsistency we need to confront. In our society, we accept armed security in many circumstances. Gold and other valuables can receive armed protection. Armoured car companies can employ trained professionals to move valuable property securely. Money can receive armed protection. Politicians and senior public officials can receive armed protection when the threat warrants it. We understand the principle: When something is sufficiently valuable or someone faces a sufficiently serious threat, we provide an appropriate level of protection.

I have a simple question: Surely, money is not more valuable than my children? Surely, gold is not more important than a classroom full of kids? And, surely, the life of a politician is not worth more protection than the life of a child walking into a Jewish school, a Muslim family entering a mosque, a Christian attending church or any Canadian entering a community institution while facing a credible threat? If our regulatory system can create tightly controlled rules to protect money, valuables and public officials, surely, we can design an equally rigorous system to protect vulnerable communities.

I want to be clear about what I'm proposing. I'm not talking about untrained people carrying firearms. I'm not talking about vigilantes. I'm not suggesting that every school, synagogue, church or mosque needs armed security. I'm talking about highly trained, licensed, screened and regulated security professionals operating under strict rules at institutions where there is a demonstrable security risk. There should be rigorous standards, enhanced training, background checks, licensing, oversight and accountability, but there should also be a realistic legal and regulatory pathway that allows an institution facing persistent and credible threats to obtain that level of protection when necessary.

This is particularly relevant to Bill 119 because the legislation itself proposes amendments to Ontario's Private Security and Investigative Services Act. The government is already looking at how private security is defined, regulated and overseen, so this is the right time to ask a larger question: Are our security laws designed for the

threat environment communities actually face? Police cannot stand outside every synagogue, every Jewish school, every mosque, church, temple or community centre at every hour of every day. Communities should not have to wait until after a tragedy to demonstrate that the threat was real.

Bill 119 recognizes an important principle: As society changes, our public safety laws sometimes have to change with it. I agree, but if we are going to modernize these laws, we also need to recognize how the threat environment facing community institutions has changed. We know the threat exists. We have seen Jewish schools shot at. We have seen synagogues attacked. We have seen what happened in Belleville. And we have seen, in Michigan, what can happen when trained, armed security is present at the moment it is desperately needed.

My request is straightforward: Give vulnerable community institutions a realistic, highly regulated pathway to protect the people inside them, because my children are worth protecting, the members of my community are worth protecting and every Canadian who walks into a school, synagogue, mosque, church or other community institution under threat is worth protecting too. Thank you.

1110

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir, for your delegation.

I'd like to move now, please, to the Salvation Army. For each speaker, could you please share your name and your position with the Salvation Army for Hansard? Thank you so much, and please begin.

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Thank you for the opportunity to appear. My name is Tamara Doerksen, and I'm a member of the Territorial Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Response Committee for the Salvation Army of Canada. I am joined by Lieutenant Mirna Dirani, resource officer, immigrant and refugee services, and modern slavery and human trafficking response advocate for the Salvation Army's Ontario Division. We are here to comment on schedules 4, 9 and 16 of Bill 119 based on our experience supporting individuals affected by human trafficking.

With respect to schedule 4, we support the recognition and enforcement in Ontario of qualifying restraining orders issued elsewhere in Canada. Survivors often relocate to achieve safety and stability. Protection should not end at a provincial border.

With respect to schedule 9, we strongly support the proposed coerced debt framework.

We support retaining a definition of human trafficking that aligns with the Criminal Code, continuing to allow survivors to access remedies without requiring a criminal charge or conviction. Many survivors face significant barriers to participating in the criminal justice process. Charges may be reduced, resolved through other offences or not proceed despite evidence of harm. Access to support should not depend on the outcome of a criminal proceeding.

We also support the use of designated organizations. Survivors should not be expected to navigate complex

legal, financial and administrative processes alone. Designated organizations should be experienced, trauma-informed organizations with established processes and relationships with creditors and financial institutions, helping them identify claims, enhance safety and connect survivors to recovery services.

As implementation moves forward, we encourage consideration of several practical questions, including accessibility for survivors with precarious or undocumented immigration status, accessibility for those without legal representation, eligibility of debts incurred after trafficking but as a result of the exploitation, meaningful resourcing for designated organizations and ensuring implementation remains trauma-informed and survivor-centred.

Finally, with respect to schedule 16, we support extending to victims of criminal harassment a civil remedy already available to victims of human trafficking. For many survivors, harassment, intimidation, surveillance and threats continue long after exploitation ends. Extending access to a civil remedy helps reduce barriers to justice and improve access to redress.

I will now turn my time over to Lieutenant Mirna Dirani.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

Lieutenant, you can start. Thank you for joining us.

Lieutenant Mirna Dirani: Thank you, Tamara. My name is Mirna Dirani, resource officer, immigrant and refugee services, from the Salvation Army, modern slavery and human trafficking advocate for the Salvation Army Ontario Division. Through our work supporting survivors of human trafficking, we have seen first-hand that leaving exploitation is often only the beginning of recovery.

In some cases, survivors use personal credit cards to pay for temporary hotel accommodations when shelter spaces are unavailable or when a shelter environment is not safe or appropriate for them. Survivors incur costs for basic needs, including food, medication, transportation and housing, while rebuilding their lives. We have also seen survivors incur expenses related to travel and identity documents after discovering traffickers had obtained documents in their name without their knowledge or consent.

The trafficking has ended, but the financial consequences have not. That financial burden creates another layer of vulnerability during recovery. Experiences like these are why we welcome the proposed coerced debt framework. Yet, we raise questions about how the framework will operate in practice. Will debts incurred after someone exits trafficking, but that are directly connected to the consequences of that exploitation, be eligible under the framework?

We support the involvement of designated organizations because survivors often need help navigating multiple systems and accessing supports. Our experience also highlights the importance of early intervention. Recognizing the signs of trafficking is only the first step. Survivors need access to trusted organizations that can respond, provide support and help them navigate recovery.

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Thank you, Lieutenant Dirani.

To recap, the Salvation Army supports the intent of Bill 119 and welcomes measures that strengthen protections for survivors of human trafficking, but implementation determines whether a survivor can use the protections and remedies it creates.

We encourage survivor-centred implementation, ensuring meaningful support for designated organizations; accessibility for all survivors, including those facing barriers due to immigration status, geography, financial circumstances or vulnerability; and recognize the importance of efforts that reduce demand for exploitation by holding traffickers and purchasers accountable.

Survivor protection, prevention, early intervention and accountability must work together to address human trafficking effectively. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Our next presenter is Carly Kalish. And for the record, Carly, you need to say your name and affiliation.

Ms. Carly Kalish: I'll do it properly this time.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

Ms. Carly Kalish: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Carly Kalish and I am the CEO of Victim Services Toronto.

Every year, Victim Services Toronto supports thousands of people in the immediate aftermath of violence, exploitation and trauma. Through that work, we have learned something very simple: Leaving violence does not always mean being free of it.

For survivors of human trafficking, exploitation can follow them long after they've left their trafficker. It follows them onto their credit report. It follows them when they apply for an apartment, when they need a cellphone, when they try to finance a car, when they want to go back to school and when they apply for new credit. And sometimes, years after they've escaped the person who exploited them, the financial damage that person created is still determining where they can live, where they can work, whether they can continue their education and what kind of future they can rebuild. This is why the coerced debt provision of Bill 119 matters so much.

At Victim Services Toronto, we've been doing this work through our Reclaim program. I want to make something clear: Coerced debt relief is not really about debt; it's about freedom. Imagine a survivor trying to find an apartment in Ontario's difficult rental market. She has income. She has references. She's ready to start again, but she also has a credit report filled with debt through her trafficker. Now, imagine that credit debt is verified and removed from her credit history. Her credit score rises more than 100 points. She applies for an apartment again. This time, the landlord chooses her. That debt relief just became housing.

Or, consider a survivor we helped after she left her trafficker. She wanted a completely new beginning, a new job in a new city, a life that belonged to her. We helped her prepare for the interview. She got the job, but there was a problem: The job was outside Toronto and she needed a car to get there. The debt associated with her

trafficking had damaged her credit to the point where obtaining new financing was the barrier. We helped her address that coerced debt, her credit changed, she was able to finance a car and, suddenly, she could get work. That debt relief became transportation, transportation became employment, employment became independence and independence made it possible for her to build a life further away from the person who exploited her.

These may sound like financial transactions; they are not. They are tangible barriers being removed from a survivor's path. That can mean a home, a job, an education. That is what this legislation has the potential to enable on a much larger scale.

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In fact, Victim Services Toronto has just received funding to advocate for the replication of this legislation nationally—an opportunity for Ontario to model to the rest of Canada what it looks like to remove coerced debt and better support survivors of human trafficking in rebuilding their lives.

I also want to commend the creation of the simplified adjudication process. During consultation, we raised a serious concern about a system that could require trafficking survivors to go to court and publicly recount their exploitation simply to prove that a debt was not truly theirs. Bill 119 creates an alternative in which eligible disputes can be determined through a written adjudication process. That is important because it's a trauma-informed approach. A survivor should not have to repeatedly relive what happened to her in order to recover from what happened to her. And while I appreciate the legislation confirms that a police report or investigation is not required, the larger principle is what matters. Financial recovery should not depend on a survivor successfully navigating another system first.

I also want to speak about how this program is implemented. The legislation contemplates designating organizations with expertise in human trafficking and coerced debt. Our strong recommendation is that Ontario consider a single, specialized verifying organization for this function, while allowing community organizations across the province to refer survivors into that system, because this work is specialized. It has taken us years to establish protocols with creditors, years to understand how different financial institutions operate, years to develop escalation processes when cases become complicated and years to build relationships where creditors know that when a verification comes from us, it has been carefully reviewed. That trust matters.

There are other important victim-centred provisions in Bill 119 as well. The amendment to the Victims' Bill of Rights creates a civil cause of action for criminal harassment that does not depend on criminal charges or conviction. That matters because the absence of a conviction does not mean the absence of harm.

The adoption provisions also strengthen oversight of adoption practitioners in intercountry adoption, including additional safeguards around the systems through which vulnerable children are adopted. These provisions are

different, but there is a simple principle running through them: Good systems should reduce vulnerability, not add to it.

A child entering an adoption system deserves strong safeguards, a person experiencing persistent harassment deserves meaningful avenues for recourse and a trafficking survivor who has escaped exploitation deserves the opportunity to rebuild without carrying her trafficker's debt into every apartment application, every finance decision and every attempt to start again.

At Victim Services Toronto, we often meet people on the worst day of their lives. Our responsibility cannot end when helping them survive that day. We have to look at what happens the next day, and the month after that, and the year after that. Can she get an apartment? Can she go to work? Can she get back into school? Can she rebuild her credit? Can she move forward? Because freedom from trafficking should not simply mean being physically separated from a trafficker; it should mean having the tools to build a life in which the trafficker no longer has power over you.

Bill 119 gives Ontario an opportunity to reduce some of those real barriers. As you move toward implementation, I would urge you to keep the system specialized, consistent and trauma-informed. Give survivors many doors through which they can ask for help, but behind those doors, build one system that works—one that creditors trust, one that community agencies can rely upon and, most importantly, one that gives survivors something exploitation tried to take away from them: the ability to determine what comes next.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much to your delegation.

We're now on to questioning from the members of the committee to the witnesses in front of us this morning, divided into two rounds of 6.5 minutes for the government members, 6.5 minutes for the official opposition and 6.5 minutes for the third party. We're going to start with the members of the official opposition.

MPP Stevens, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to wish you a very happy birthday. You can call me out of order if you'd like, but I'd still like to wish you that today.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: And to you, presenters, thank you for coming in and taking the time today in expressing how you feel about Bill 119 and the amendments too.

I guess my questions would be to Tamara and Mirna. Thank you for being here again today. Your organization works directly with survivors of human trafficking, so you see the consequences of coerced debt in a way that governments often do not.

Bill 119 finally puts protections around coerced debt into legislation. A similar measure, Bill 41, received royal assent back in December 2023—I'm not sure if you're aware of that—and was never brought into force. So this government has been sitting on that for a few years now.

From your perspective, what has that delay meant for survivors? Are the protections in Bill 119 strong enough to make a meaningful difference for someone who is trying to rebuild their life after trafficking?

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Thank you for that question.

From the Salvation Army's perspective, what is important is what is on the table now and being able to positively impact the lives of survivors.

Survivors of human trafficking face many barriers to be able to rebuild their lives, but the coerced debt from their trafficker is a very significant one that can very much hold them back from being able to achieve what we know they are able to achieve.

So I believe—from the Salvation Army's and, most importantly, from a survivor's perspective—that the implementation of this is very significant in terms of engaging survivors, engaging organizations that see the challenges that survivors of coerced debt face every day, to be involved in the actual implementation.

I would just ask Lieutenant Mirna if she would like to add anything to that response.

Lieutenant Mirna Dirani: Thank you, Tamara.

From the Salvation Army's perspective, this schedule 9, of course, is a part of a bigger picture for survivors. We do believe this is a very important step for them to move forward in their recovery and their healing as they move on but isn't a very important step to take before they go into finding housing, to finding stability, to finding jobs. From our own experience, we do see a lot of survivors who are stuck at that point and who cannot move forward. So we believe this is a very important schedule that we could be focusing on in that bigger picture of a survivor's healing process.

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

The Acting Chair (Mr. Tyler Allsopp): Thank you both for your responses.

MPP Stevens, to your next question.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Oh. Thank you, Chair. New face there—kind of shocked me there. Anyway, thank you, Chair.

Through you, I'd like to thank Eli for coming this afternoon—or, this morning, now. Thank you for your presentation and for bringing such an important issue forward.

As someone who serves as the official opposition critic for the Solicitor General, I want to say clearly that there is absolutely no place—no place—in Ontario or across Canada for anti-Semitism or hate crimes against Jewish communities or against any community in Ontario.

My question is to you, Eli: From your perspective, what is the most important thing we can do, both as legislators and as a community, to make the Jewish families feel safer and to make more support when they experience hate or discrimination within their local communities?

Mr. Eli Yufest: Thanks for the question.

I just want to say I agree that Ontario shouldn't have any room for any hate, whether it's Jewish or other kind of hate.

I'll say, in short, I think I outlined what my community—and I should point out; I'm not sure that I mentioned it at the outset of my comments—I come here in my personal capacity. I don't speak on behalf of any organization or the community, if you will, in that regard. But I can sort of say empirically, I am involved in advocating for the provisions that I outlined in my comments where we are requesting both the federal and the provincial government to change legislation so that it will enable any community—in my case, the Jewish community—to hire armed protection. That is without a doubt—without a doubt—in my opinion and the opinion of many people that I have spoken to about this issue, the single biggest thing that legislators, provincial and federal, can do to protect the community.

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I'll give you some anecdotes. I do private security, unfortunately, at my kids' school. We have, just for context, hired security guards. We have, at times, when the threat warrants it, police officers. We have parent security guards walking around the school because of course, who knows who should be on premise better than the parents? And so the more layers of protection that we can put into force, the better I think the institutions are going to be protected.

I shouldn't have to do that. I shouldn't have to stand outside my kids' school in the morning or in the afternoon for pick-up, working as a security guard. I should be out there working, paying my taxes, coming home, taking my kids to soccer—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response, sir.

We're now going to move to the third party. MPP Collard, please.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I almost feel PTSD from this hearing this morning. It brings me back to 2023 when we had hearings about Bill 41 then. The fact that Bill 41 was passed and was never implemented—I take grievance to that, because during all that time, for those three years, survivors were promised relief that never materialized for them. That must have added to their anguish; when you think that a solution to your issue is coming and it doesn't come to fruition, it's got to put you in a very desperate situation.

I decided to go forward with that proposed legislation back in, I think, 2020, shortly after I was elected for the first time. I got to talk to a survivor, and that person explained to me the burden that came with being able to come out of a human trafficking position and trying to regain possession of her life and trying to make a living, but not being able to because of all the reasons that you described—again, Carly and Tamara and Mirna.

If they don't have those supports, then those debts become an anguish. They get creditors calling every day, and it just destroys their lives. They can't get an apartment. They can't get a car. They can't get a student loan because they have bad credit, and that seems to be a simple fix.

I did mention to the Solicitor General this morning that I had been harassing the Attorney General for three years

to implement the measures of Bill 41. I'm glad that now, in Bill 119, we're looking at real implementation with a mechanism that seems to be fair and applicable.

I'm also encouraged by the fact that the Solicitor General approached me after his presentation and following my question this morning that he needed to understand what happened before because he wants to make sure that this actually proceeds. I did tell him that the most important thing is not to create more delays and make sure, as soon as this bill is passed, that we see the mechanism available to survivors. I'm saying that because there are new members here that may not be aware of this very long process that happened.

I want to give you a chance now. I'll start with Carly first: Do you see anything in this bill, in these provisions, that could be improved? I'm saying that because, following the public hearings, there will be clause-by-clause where we can propose amendments. Is there anything that you see that could be improved?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Ms. Carly Kalish: I should say that Victim Services Toronto has been doing this work since 2023, and we've eliminated over \$2.5 million of coerced debt so far. The average human trafficking survivor leaves with \$14,000 over eight creditors. It's complicated. It's really complicated, and so one thing that I hope becomes clear through the implementation of the regulations is that there is one verifying agency, not multiple. You have to have relationships with banks. You have to have relationships with telecom companies. You have to develop ways to share very secure data that has personal financial information. You have to have an understanding of both finance and human trafficking in order to be that verifier. I think that is really important, that it should be one, not multiple, for the province.

And, you know, there's always things if you're dreaming, right? If you're dreaming that some of their debt could be paid back—you know, all of those things to make survivors' lives even easier.

We hope it's regulated quickly and that it moves forward quickly because, as you mentioned, it is vital for the rebuilding of survivors' lives.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Actually, I want to give the chance to Tamara or Mirna to comment on the same. Is there anything you see in the bill that could be improved in terms of helping those survivors getting out of the coerced debt?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please. Thank you.

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Thank you for the question. We believe that this is a very important step forward. It will come down to implementation and ensuring that organizations that support survivors on the front line and individuals with lived experience are very engaged in the steps of implementation, because the processes should be built around the needs of survivors versus survivors needing to navigate complex processes.

We also believe that designated organizations are very critical to implementation. There are organizations that are already doing this work, that are doing very important survivor-informed, trauma-informed work and have established relationships with agencies, creditors, financial institutions. Those relationships should be respected for the sake of survivors as well.

I'd like to give Lieutenant Mirna an opportunity to respond as well.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Unfortunately, you only have 20 seconds to do that.

Lieutenant Mirna Dirani: Thank you, Tamara.

Thank you for your question. Quickly—another layer is the vulnerability that we should be addressing for newcomers that have no status and probably cannot access easily these—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. I need to interrupt you.

I now need to go to the government members. MPP Ciriello, please.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Thank you to all the speakers for coming today. My question is going to be for Carly and Tamara. But before I ask it, can I thank you for the incredible work that you do to support victims and survivors each and every day across our communities, and sometimes, as mentioned, on the worst day of their lives? Your work is remarkable.

I want to focus on the debt amendments. We know that it will help survivors who have experienced financial consequences. We heard it in your testimony here today. My question is simple: What message would these amendments send to survivors and victims across Ontario?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please. Thank you.

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Thank you for that question. It would mean the ability to move forward with their lives. Yes, they do continue to face additional barriers, but coerced debt is a significant one. It will allow them to be able to then move forward with employment, with housing, with the other elements that are so critical to their long-term stability and support.

Ms. Carly Kalish: It means everything. It means that you've listened, that you've heard survivors and that you believe that they deserve a second chance. You think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: The things on the bottom are those basic—you can't do anything else until those basic things are satisfied. You are helping them satisfy those things through this legislation so that they can move on and rebuild their lives.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please—MPP Allsopp.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to all the members of the panel who are here today.

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My question will be for Mr. Yufest. You referenced in your comments today the shooting at the Belleville synagogue which occurred a couple of weeks ago in my home community. I think we can all agree that if it wasn't for the heroic action of both of those officers—first Con-

stable Jeff Smith, who was stationed at the synagogue that evening, and then, of course, Constable Mike McCurdy who responded afterwards—that we’d be looking at a very significantly different issue and, as the Solicitor General said earlier, possibly a massacre at that location.

The decision to have Constable Jeff Smith at the synagogue was built based on a relationship between the Belleville Police Service and our local Jewish community to provide officers, when available, as part of the regular duty, during the High Holidays to make sure that that community felt protected. That was a decision that was made by the police services board. I’d like to take a moment to commend Chief Murray Rodd, Deputy Chief Sheri Meeks as well as the chair of the Belleville Police Service Board, Heather Smith, for making that decision and for having that commitment to our Jewish community.

As you know, Bill 119 proposes establishing provincial priorities for police services boards. These priorities would set expectations for strategic planning and will not interfere with day-to-day operations of the boards. What policing priorities would you suggest be considered if Bill 119 passes, and why?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please. Thank you.

Mr. Eli Yufest: Thanks for the question.

With regard to what I think it should include for the police, maybe I’ll answer with the following: We know that the police do a great job. You alluded to it in your comments; I happen to think the same. There are police parked in front of my kids’ school. There are police parked in front of my synagogue.

Police, as I noted in my comments, can’t be everywhere at every hour of the day, so we need to find a different solution. The different solution, I think, needs to be—if money, gold and politicians can have armed protection, my kids deserve at least the same right.

And so I think the government needs to consider how we enable my kids, my community and other communities to have at least the same right that you have and at least the same right as gold and money. I would consider that, as you guys are contemplating any amendments to the legislation, you consider children being equally important as politicians and gold.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you, sir.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. MPP Gualtieri, please.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: My question is to EE-lai—Yufest? I got that correct?

Mr. Eli Yufest: Sort of. EH-lee.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: EH-lee. I thought it was EE-lai.

Mr. Eli Yufest: Half correct.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Thank you very much for being here today. I can certainly appreciate your presentation and the strife in your community.

But as public safety threats are evolving, including issues such as organized retail crime, harassment and safety concerns in public spaces, which provisions of Bill 119 do you believe will have the greatest impact on helping your community respond to these emerging challenges?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for the question.

You have a little over a minute to respond, sir. Thank you.

Mr. Eli Yufest: Great. Thanks for the question.

As I mentioned in my notes, I’m not sure that there are really any meaningful provisions in the legislation as it currently exists that can protect my community.

I’m going to refer back to your colleague’s question around what one thing could be done to the legislation to protect my community, and that is allowing for the provision of a highly regulated, trained provision so that security guards can be armed to protect vulnerable institutions. That currently does not exist in the legislation.

I can cite many, many more examples beyond what I cited here: restaurants being shot up in Eglinton–Lawrence, in York Centre; schools being shot up. As I do security around my kids’ school, I have cars that are driving by yelling, “Fuck the Jews. Kill the Jews.” Of course, I have to report it to the proper authorities. That should not happen. If, God forbid, somebody decided to do what they did in Belleville and they were successful and they entered my kids’ school, we’d be having a very different conversation right now.

So what I’m asking the legislators: Before that happens, allow for the protection of my kids to be on a level playing field with politicians, gold and money—that’s it. I want the same right for my kids that you have, along with gold and money.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response, sir.

We are now going to start the second round of questions with the members of the official opposition. MPP Stevens, please, when you’re ready.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Again, thank you to the panellists for coming this morning.

Carly—and do you mind me calling you Carly?

Ms. Carly Kalish: Please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Okay, great. I did ask the question earlier to the Salvation Army presenters, but on practical access to the new protection site, Bill 119 creates a system involving designated organizations that can help survivors establish that a debt was coerced and assist them with their creditors and dispute resolutions.

What would you need to see from this government in terms of funding, staffing and access to services to ensure that this isn’t simply a right that exists on paper, as we saw in Bill 41 sitting on a shelf, but something that a survivor anywhere in Ontario actually can use?

Ms. Carly Kalish: So, I will tell you that Victim Services Toronto currently has a program called Reclaim, and Reclaim is a program that already works with human trafficking survivors to eliminate their fraudulent and coercive debt incurred due to human trafficking. So we advocate on behalf of survivors to creditors. That program exists regardless of Bill 41 or now Bill 119.

However, there are some creditors that are not co-operative, and so what this legislation allows is for those creditors that don’t co-operate—to make them move

forward so that survivors' lives are that much easier. Does that make sense?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes, it does. Thank you.

What are the biggest gaps you're seeing today in Ontario's support system for trafficking survivors, and does Bill 119 meaningfully address those gaps, or is there much more that needs to be done outside of the legislation, do you think?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Who are you directing your question—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Oh, sorry—to Carly.

Ms. Carly Kalish: Sorry, can you ask it one more time?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Yes, so coerced debt is only one part of the financial and psychological harm, as you mentioned, caused by human trafficking.

So basically, what I'm asking is, what are the biggest gaps you are seeing today in Ontario's support systems for trafficking survivors, and does Bill 119 meaningfully address those gaps, do you feel? And this is your personal opinion, of course, right?

Ms. Carly Kalish: Sure, for sure.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Or is there much more that needs to be done outside of this legislation?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: If you could elaborate. Thank you.

Ms. Carly Kalish: Sure.

Of course, this legislation just addresses the coerced and fraudulent debt component of human trafficking, and survivors, of course, need many things in order to be well, you know, including housing and counselling and many other services, because it's a form of trauma that impacts every part of your being.

So I would say this legislation is very specific only to the coercive debt component, of course.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm leaving my time to—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. MPP Wong-Tam, please, to your question.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: To our speakers, thank you, everyone, for taking time out today to present to the committee.

My questions are specifically regarding the heavy lifting that the Salvation Army and Victim Services Toronto are doing in this particular sector of work. I recognize that it's emotionally laborious. I recognize that your organizations are under-resourced, living with grants and doing what you can to provide extraordinary support to survivors. I just want to acknowledge that because I know that's not easy work.

My question is specifically regarding the quantum of \$50,000 that has been established by Bill 119, and I want to commend MPP Collard for her dog-like determination to chase down the Solicitor General over the last three years to make sure that the regulations are somewhat before us, and yet we're here with Bill 119 and we're still not quite there.

With respect to the quantum of \$50,000 that will allow a survivor to go through the dispute resolution process—and that means that anyone who has been forced to take on coercive debt over \$50,000, they're left through the general court system, which we know is years backlogged. Ontario has the slowest court system in Canada.

Do you think that that was the right number to cap it at, \$50,000, or should it be higher to provide financial relief for those who are straddled with six figures of coercive debt?

Ms. Carly Kalish: I mean, I'll tell you—I think I mentioned this already—that the average human trafficking survivor has about \$14,000 of debt cumulatively, over eight creditors. Of course, it would be wonderful if it was higher, but, realistically, the majority of the survivors we're supporting are under that threshold—but, obviously, wonderful if it could be increased.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that answer.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes, thank you for the answer.

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I think one could argue that for those who are left behind with even higher debt quantum, they are needing more relief, and more urgently. That was the reason I asked the question. I just wanted to know, why the \$50,000 cap?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 44 seconds.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: What additional constructive feedback would you have for the government to further strengthen the bill? We know that it's not perfect. The regulations are not out. There's no consultation. What is one thing you'd like to see in this bill that's not there now?

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Lieutenant Mirna, would you like to respond?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You've got 21 seconds.

Lieutenant Mirna Dirani: Thank you, Tamara.

We believe just access—for it to be accessible to everyone, the most vulnerable, and clear communication of how this could be implemented and accessible to everyone. For those who have language barriers and for those who are in rural spaces, just—this is the main communication, inaccessibility.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We're now going to move to the third party. Madame Collard, please—and if you could help me out by directing the question to the particular organization.

Mme Lucille Collard: That's fair. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I guess speaking about human trafficking in more than one piece of legislation is a good thing, even though we're not at the implementation we want to be—but at least we're moving forward; I want to believe so.

To go back a little bit to MPP Stevens, a more general question about what is needed—I think it's a great thing that because of what we're doing here in Canada, it has a broader impact internationally. We know human trafficking doesn't know boundaries, and that's why it's important

that we try to coordinate our efforts as much as possible. As the designated member for the women's network of the assembly of francophone parliamentarians, I worked on the report to gather information about what's being done across the world in terms of prevention and raising awareness, in terms of intervention and law enforcement, and in terms of recovery and assisting survivors. That led to a pretty comprehensive report that talks about what's being done. And the APF—the assembly of francophone parliamentarians—represents, actually, around 91 jurisdictions across the world, so the impact is pretty broad.

Again, I think it's important that we talk about human trafficking in terms of the big fléau that it is and that we need to address.

I'm just going to go back to a specific question regarding the reach of this bill. I'm a little bit concerned—and I want to hear you both, the Salvation Army and Carly, on this—about the provincial reach. Victim Services Toronto is located here in Toronto, but we know that victims are everywhere in the province of Ontario. I guess it's a great thing that we will have designated organizations. But what do you suggest or what do you believe we have access to in terms of designated organizations, and can they provide the services provincially?

I'll start with Carly, and then we'll go to the Salvation Army.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that question.

Please start with your response. You have four minutes to respond—and I know that we're going to be going to the Salvation Army—so take your time.

Ms. Carly Kalish: Reclaim, as a program of Victim Services Toronto—it's confusing because the word "Toronto" is in our title. The Reclaim program is actually national in scope. We work with survivors across the country who have coerced and fraudulent debt, and why that's important is because the—well, it's important because, of course, you want service delivery to be equitable across the country, and you want survivors who have debt in more than one province to be able to work with one agency to be able to relieve that debt. But it's also important because the institutions you need to develop relationships with in order to address the coerced debt are mostly federal. For example, the major FIs, all the financial institutions with which we had to develop relationships and protocols and information-sharing practices, are federal. I believe Equifax, the credit unions might be provincial—obviously, work federally, but I believe are regulated partly provincially. So that's really important in terms of having those relationships. Although it's confusing to have Toronto in our title, we work with survivors across the country and across the province of Ontario to be able to resolve those debts.

Also, survivors: How Reclaim works is that you can work with any service provider across the country, or we can speak specifically about Ontario. You could be working with the Salvation Army; the advocate for all

your other services connected to human trafficking is at the Salvation Army and then that worker can work with Victim Services Toronto so that you don't have to retell your story again. They can work with you to gather the documents you need to give to Victim Services Toronto's Reclaim program to address your debt.

It's those relationships, though, that are complicated and really big institutions, so it's really important that an agency is able to establish those relationships but also work provincially or beyond provincially.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the Salvation Army, please—to the question.

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Thank you for that question. I think that it will be very important. From the Salvation Army's perspective, there are individuals that are in Indigenous communities, rural communities, other marginalized populations, and that the designated organization or organizations will be working with community organizations in that area that have trusted relationships already with survivors will be critical.

Lieutenant Mirna, would you like to add to that?

Lieutenant Mirna Dirani: Yes. We believe in strong partnerships with community organizations. We believe that raising awareness is the start of prevention work, and then that leads to early intervention. When we have strong partnerships—raising awareness in schools, with students, with social services, also in the government and law enforcement—that means when we do see signs of human trafficking, we can then connect with the right referrals and supports. It means that we're just working together to cover the gaps and just having that strong connection to be able to refer and support each other as organizations that are working together to support the survivor.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We have 16 seconds, so I'm now going to move—

Mme Lucille Collard: Yes, that's fine.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): —to the government for questions. MPP Darouze, please, when you're ready, sir.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you, Chair. Through you, thank you very much to the presenters. We appreciate you being here this morning to discuss Bill 119 and the impact that has on our community.

I want to start with a question to Mr. Eli Yufest. We appreciate your passion and your advocacy. I understand the difficult time that we are in in our communities right now. I know you touched a little bit on it, but we're going to talk a little bit more about governance. Bill 119 includes measures intended to strengthen protections for victims and improve community safety.

From your perspective, as someone interested in public safety, how could these changes benefit vulnerable individuals and families across Ontario? A little bit more in depth of what you already alluded to.

Mr. Eli Yufest: My colleagues here on the panel with me are far better placed to talk about how some of the changes can impact the vulnerable communities, but let me go back to what I told your colleagues earlier.

The biggest miss in this legislation right now is, my community—and other communities, but I'm speaking on behalf of my community right now—is vulnerable. Like I said in my opening remarks, when my kids go to school and when my kids go to synagogue, I worry whether or not they're going to be safe there. And so what this legislation does—my colleagues have mentioned some of the great things that you guys are working on, but the biggest gap is what I have been speaking to all morning, and that is, we need a licensed, regulated provision that will arm private security guards to protect vulnerable institutions so that the only thing that I need to worry about when my kids go to school is whether they packed their lunch or whether they did their homework from the night before. I should not have to worry about their security.

Again, I'll go back to the point: I would like to ask you guys, as you contemplate changes in this legislation, I want you to think about whether gold and money is more important, because those non-human, intangible objects—I suppose they're tangible—those objects have the right for armed protection. Why don't my kids have that same right? Politicians have the right for armed protection. Why don't my kids have that same right? So as you guys contemplate changes, please keep that in mind.

1200

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I have MPP Sarrazin, please, when you're ready, sir.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you for being here today and, of course, for everything you're doing for victims of any crimes. I mean, it's always amazing to hear what's being done.

I know we talked about the Reclaim national program, which I learned more about. I want to know how the proposed amendments of Bill 119 actually complement this and how important it is to actually work with financial institutions, creditors. Because from what I could understand, you gave us a number—the average debt is \$14,000 toward eight creditors. So I'm assuming this communication is really important. Maybe you can just both tell us more about how we think it's going to be working?

Ms. Carly Kalish: I'll tell you a quick story. We had a human trafficking survivor call us. She said, "A collections agency keeps calling me and says I have a \$300 Highway 407 toll bill." She's like, "I've never driven on the 407." So we did some research in terms of what it looks like to get a transponder, and simply, someone could just go online and fill out an application to get the transponder in your name.

So we called the 407. They're an incredible partner of ours—before this legislation has passed, which is incredible. She said, "Well, actually she has a \$9,000 bill from the 407 from being driven on the highway from hotel to hotel." So you're actually paying for your own exploitation.

Bill 41—previously Bill 41, now Bill 119—does two things that are incredible. One is that that collection call stops, because that collection call is not just a reminder of

how much money you owe, but it's a reminder of your sexual exploitation. The second thing it does is that it removes it from your credit report so that it's not bogging you down, stopping you from moving on and rebuilding your life. That's what's incredible about it.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Maybe I'll give a chance to Tamara.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Salvation Army, please. Thank you.

Ms. Tamara Doerksen: Thank you. I'd like to pass this question to Lieutenant Mirna to speak to some of the stories that we have encountered with survivors.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Lieutenant?

Lieutenant Mirna Dirani: Thank you, Tamara.

From our experience in the Salvation Army through the front-line work that we do, we find that leaving the trafficking is just the beginning of their journey, and then facing these obstacles of debt does not allow them to move forward.

With this schedule 9 in Bill 119, what happens is that it's giving them hope for a future. What's happening is that it's telling them that what happened to them is not their story. It's not the end of their story; it's just a small journey of it, and we are able to support them. Their healing is not only through this debt, but it's holistic. We do care for them in every possible way in a holistic manner, and it starts with removing this debt for them.

What we also see is that, after they leave, this is not the end of the exploitation. Because as they find the courage to leave their traffickers, they sometimes then have to go and find accommodations in hotels and to be able to cover for their basic needs. So they also accumulate more debt on their credit cards after they leave.

Our question is, is there a possibility also to look at the debt that could be appearing after they leave the exploitation that they have been through? But also making it accessible for victims of labour trafficking and for those who are newcomers, who have no status or no papers, and that fear and those language barriers in coming forward and knowing how to access these systems—what can we do to make sure that it is accessible for them in a way where they don't feel threatened or they don't feel fear of coming forward and reporting it to the right authorities and organizations?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

Members of the committee, that concludes the time allotted for our witnesses this morning. Thank you very much for being here.

Members of the committee, this committee is recessed until 1 o'clock this afternoon. Our first presenter is the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

This committee is recessed until 1 o'clock.

The committee recessed from 1205 to 1300.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Committee members, we're back in session to continue our deliberations on Bill 119, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend various other Acts.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION
OF CHIEFS OF POLICE
VICTIM SERVICES TORONTO
PROJECT RECOVER

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I have a piece of business, though. With the committee's agreement dated July 30, 2026, it permits the committee to have one witness from each organization to appear in person. Is there agreement from the committee to have two witnesses from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police appear before us this afternoon? Agreed? That's agreed.

We have everyone in front of us who is scheduled to make delegations today, starting with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. For the record, please, if you could identify yourselves for Hansard and then start your presentation.

It's seven minutes long—if it goes any longer, I'm going to stop you—and then that will be subsequently followed by questions, starting with the official opposition, the third party and the government. We'll have two rounds, and they'll be directing questions to you, which my Clerk times so that we have equal ability to ask questions. Brevity is good so that additional questions could be put to you by the committee members within their allotted time, please.

Chief, why don't you start?

Mr. Peter Moreira: Good morning, Chair, and members of the committee. My name is Peter Moreira. I'm the chief of the Durham Regional Police Service, but today I'm here as the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak about Bill 119.

The OACP is the collective voice of police leadership, both sworn and civilian, throughout Ontario. Our members are accountable every day for public safety in communities of every size, from large urban centres to small, rural and northern detachments. We also are responsible for supporting the hard-working police officers and members who dedicate themselves to serving the public safety needs within their communities.

Let me begin by stating clearly that the OACP supports the overall direction of this bill. As omnibus legislation, Bill 119 is broad, and much of it responds to the public safety challenges chiefs see first-hand: new offences targeting pill presses and precursors give police in Ontario more tools against illegal drug production; restraining orders made in other provinces would be enforceable here so that someone at risk is not left without proper protection simply because they moved; clearer rules for towing; debt relief for survivors of human trafficking; and a single public location for information about high-risk offenders are all very practical steps. These are positive and meaningful changes.

I want to speak directly to schedule 3, the amendments to the Community Safety and Policing Act. Chiefs support strong standards and strong accountability. Public confidence in policing depends on both, and a well-supported office of the inspector general has a role to play.

We also know that police service boards and chiefs are close to the communities they serve. Provincial priorities will be most effective when they are developed in consultation with boards, chiefs and communities when they leave room to reflect the local conditions and when they are clear enough to be put into practice.

We encourage the committee to make sure the process for setting priorities and the expanded role of the inspector general are clearly articulated. The OACP supports strong oversight and accountability, but authorities, responsibilities and processes must be clearly defined so that governance structures remain predictable, effective and well understood.

I want to make a few comments on the implementation. A new offence, a new power or a new policy decision only makes communities safer if police officers are trained and equipped to use it. That is especially true for the drug production offences, which sit alongside federal law and require specialized knowledge. We welcome the government's indication that it will look to enhance training and other supports for drug investigations, and we ask that they arrive together with the new authorities.

Much of this bill's real-world impact and, frankly, success will be determined through the regulations rather than the legislation. So we stand ready to be consulted before those regulations are finalized, ensuring that the operational expertise and stakeholder input inform the final regulatory framework.

High-risk offenders: I want to touch on this piece of the legislation. Chiefs make the decision to issue a community safety notification when it's needed to protect the public. A single provincial website or registry can make that information easier for people to find and more consistent right across Ontario. To earn public trust, it needs to be accurate, transparent, kept up to date and paired with clear rules for removal and protecting victims' privacy. We know that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has raised considerations to this point, and we encourage the government to address them.

Chair, in closing, members of the OACP share the government's goal of safer streets and stronger communities. We stand ready to work with this ministry and this committee to make sure Bill 119 delivers on it. Thank you, and I will be happy to take any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Chief. Did your vice-president have anything to add?

If you do, you've got three minutes.

Mr. Bill Fordy: Thank you, Chair. I'll be quick.

My name is Bill Fordy. I'm the Chief of Police with the Niagara Regional Police Service, and as you referenced, Chair, I'm also the vice-president of OACP. I've been in policing for 37 years. Of those, 28 years were spent in British Columbia with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, where I had the privilege of being the chief in Surrey, and then ultimately, I retired as an assistant commissioner overseeing the Lower Mainland district. I think some of those experiences are particularly relevant to some of the legislation you're considering today.

Specifically with respect to my current task, Niagara region is made up of 12 municipalities, four international borders, major highway corridors like the QEW, and it is one of the busiest tourist destinations in our country. Our officers respond to drug trafficking, human trafficking and serious collisions, often in the same shift. To give some context, in 2025, the NRPS initiated 241 human trafficking investigations—52% more than in 2024—processed approximately 432 kilograms of controlled substances and nearly 22,000 pills. That same year, 9,028 collisions were reported in our region, resulting in 36 fatalities.

The measures in Bill 119 speak to that reality, and I support their direction. In British Columbia, I saw first-hand the impact of fentanyl coming into our country in 2013. Today, 13 years later, Ontario has no provincial legislation aimed at the equipment and materials used to produce illicit drugs, like pill presses and precursors.

The new offences, specifically the Pill Presses and Precursors Act, would change that. To use them well, officers need specialized training, clear guidance on the search and seizure, and we need the right equipment. We welcome and we invite the government's commitment to explore those supports, and we ask that they arrive with the new authorities.

I have dealt with serial killers and persons who prey upon the most vulnerable people in our communities. And as the chief referenced, when a chief issues a community notification or a public safety warning about a high-risk, dangerous offender, it is a serious decision, and it is made to protect members of our community.

One provincial website or registry will make that information more consistent and easier to find. We ask that the operating design be developed with the police, including how police services submit information, how quickly it is updated or removed and how victims are protected.

Enforceable, out-of-province restraining orders—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Chief. The time for your delegation is complete.

I'm now going to move to Dora Habashi, please. Hi, Dora.

Ms. Dora Habashi: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Dora Habashi. I'm a registered social worker with more than 18 years of experience in Ontario's child welfare system, where I held senior leadership responsibilities for adoption and permanency services. I now serve as vice-president of program operations and service excellence at Victim Services Toronto. I'm here today to speak in support of Schedule 5 of Bill 119 and the amendments to the Intercountry Adoption Act.

My years in child welfare taught me that every adoption begins with a loss and that the child is the person with the least amount of power in the process. Adoptions that cross provincial and international borders commonly take months, sometimes years, to complete. Multiple agencies and jurisdictions become involved, and each holds a piece of the process, confirming identities, family relationships, assessing homes, verifying that every document is accurate.

That takes time, and it should. Those steps are what ensure that a placement is safe, lawful, in the child's best interest and that the child's records tell their true story. Diligence is not a delay in the process; it is the protection.

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I saw this first-hand. In child welfare, we became involved with a newborn after an online ad offered the baby for sale. It looked like trafficking. In fact, the mother was being coerced to place her baby up for adoption and threatened that she would be blamed for the ad. The screening and the home study requirements uncovered the truth. We prevented an adoption that should never have happened and protected a mother from being blamed for her own exploitation.

I support these changes because any system responsible for placing children needs to do three things well: protect children from harm, create clear accountability and give decision-makers the tools to respond when circumstances change. Schedule 5 moves Ontario in that direction.

First, the approval process for adoption practitioners: An adoption home study is not just a report or an administrative requirement. It is a professional assessment on whether a placement is safe, appropriate and capable of meeting a child's needs. Requiring home studies to be completed and prepared by approved practitioners and allowing the director to address the concerns means oversight is not limited to what happens after something goes wrong.

Secondly, country-specific authorization: An agency may be competent to facilitate adoptions generally, but not every country presents with the same circumstances, safeguards or risks. Allowing the director to assess each country and suspend an authorization where safeguards are inadequate is a much more risk-informed approach. Whether we are protecting children or supporting survivors of violence and exploitation, we know that waiting for harm to occur before acting is not an adequate protection strategy.

Schedule 5 also matters because of the financial incentive that can be at play. In intercountry adoption, practitioners may be asked to pay additional fees to expedite a case. In some cases, the costs are legitimate. The concern arises when financial incentives could influence the order, the speed, or the outcome of an adoption, particularly when the child and the family have very little power. I'm not suggesting that intercountry adoption is synonymous with human trafficking; it is not. But the international framework has long recognized the need to safeguard against the sale or trafficking of children and undue financial gain.

At Victim Services Toronto, we support survivors of trafficking and exploitation. We see how exploitation can take hold where there are power imbalances and gaps in oversight.

I also support the new directives and compliance orders, because accountability works best as a continuum: identifying concerns, requiring corrective action, monitoring compliance and escalating when necessary. After 18 years in child welfare and now in victim services, a common

thread for me is that systems must be designed around the people with the least power within them. Schedule 5 is an important step in that direction. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Dunwoody, please.

Mr. Richard Dunwoody: Chair, members, my name is Richard Dunwoody, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Project Recover was a self-funded initiative that became the practical foundation of Bill 41 and the regulations under Schedule 9 of Bill 119. From 2020 to 2023, I worked with survivors, advocates on trafficking. Members from all parties recognized that work during the Bill 41 process, and I remain grateful for their support.

While I have identified 10 serious gaps in the proposed regulations, I will focus on four: survivor choice, professional qualifications, protection of positive credit history and operational guard rails.

Require professional qualifications: Although the substance that Bill 119 seeks to address often involves complex financial and legal instruments, the framework of Bill 119 prescribes no baseline competency in debt, credit or consumer protection. This concern is not theoretical. I developed a document blending evidence-based protocols; step-by-step procedural frameworks; clear safety guidelines; and practical, scenario-focused evaluations. But not-applied documented consequences have resulted in severe, irreversible outcomes, profound psychological trauma, catastrophic financial loss and critical safety violations.

Professionals assisting consumers in the bankruptcy and insolvency process, credit counselling, debt collections and creditor rights require certification to ensure an individual's objective competence and readiness, but this does not apply to Bill 119. An organization's proven competence is the only guarantee that a system built to protect survivors will not become the final instrument used to fail them.

Removing coerced debt does not address the survivor's financial identity. As currently written, Bill 119 introduces a critical paradox: It bars financial institutions from holding a survivor's exploitation against them, yet it leaves the underlining credit portfolio corrupt and fundamentally unusable. This current approach risks erasing legitimate, positive credit history with the coerced debt. That replaces one form of financial exclusion with another.

For other consumers, the existence of laws and common sense isolate fraudulent data and remove it from credit reports while preserving valid and positive information. Individuals subjected to human trafficking deserve the same precision. How does deleting good credit advance recovery, housing access or financial independence?

Bill 119 must codify a structured process with enforceable guardrails. Project Recover worked because creditors and survivor-advocates co-designed one repeatable process with oversight. It protected survivors while giving institutions consistent evidence and decision points.

In 2023, this very committee heard from Victim Services Toronto that creditors need a streamlined process. I

agree. But it also heard from them that the established checklist was followed only somewhat. Creditors have a right to know what the process is for their customers. The consequences show that without a codified route, the outcome is transferred back onto the survivor.

Finally, section 34(2)(b) limits designated entities to organizations receiving Ontario funding. That excludes independent and specialized initiatives, including the model that founded this legislation. In short, when the regulations come into play, I will be prohibited from supporting survivors. I'm not sure what the problem is in my funding—hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect these survivors, to house them and educate them. Am I required to demand and accept your funding?

Some people affected by trafficking will not approach a state-funded agency; others need culturally competent, identity-affirming or peer-led assistance. These are verified by employees of Victim Services Toronto, again appearing before this committee, that validated that some survivors will not use their services. I have had to continue to intervene when individuals decline the designated service or advocates encountered debts it could not resolve.

My career has taught me that ambiguity within organizations is resolved operationally and usually conservatively. If the rules are unclear, institutions will protect themselves first.

The durable answer is a qualified, transparent, province-wide network operating under one rigorous process with survivor choice built in. Before schedule 9 is finalized, ensure access to qualified advocates, establish mandatory competency standards of service providers, preserve legitimate credit history, and set out the operating rules all stakeholders must follow.

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These are four of 10 gaps. I invite any questions and am open to discussing the other six, as well. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We're now going to move into the questions. As we did this morning, 6.5 minutes for each of the official opposition, third party and the government. I'll let you know when you've got one minute left in your group questioning so that you can sum up your question and maybe come back to it on the second round.

We're going to start with the official opposition. MPP Stevens, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for the opportunity this afternoon. Thank you to all our presenters this afternoon for coming in. I know you all have a very busy schedule. It's always nice to hear what you like of the bill and what you'd like to see changed.

I want to thank Chief Fordy for coming in today. How was the drive in? He's coming in from Niagara. I had to ask him. But anyway, thank you and I appreciate that you're here representing the chiefs across Ontario.

But I'd like to bring this down to a local level, of course, so this will go to Chief Fordy, actually. With Bill 119 giving the minister more influence over police priorities, how can we make sure provincial priorities don't override the needs identified locally by communities such as Niagara?

Mr. Bill Fordy: Thank you for your question. Through you, Chair, as the MPP states, when the regional police service develops its strategic priorities, we go through a consultation process whereby we engage with the community, we engage with our members, and we review all interests in the development of those strategies.

I would expect that with the new legislation and the province engaging, there would be a consultation, there would be dialogue. At the end of the day, the citizens who are served at the local level are also served at the provincial level, so I would expect that those things that are most important to the communities we serve would remain fairly consistent.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Just to further on that, if you could ask the government for one thing to be changed in this legislation—you've read over schedule 3, of course. What do you think would work better in practice and what would that be? Like, what practices, would you think?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Mr. Bill Fordy: Thank you for your question and, through you, Chair, I think that what's important as we look forward with this legislation is that the police are engaged with the rollout, the development of the training, with developing the finer details on what implementation looks like. And I would expect, or I certainly would hope, and I would invite for that to happen.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: When you say training and equipment, I know that Chief Mor—how do I say it?

Mr. Peter Moreira: Moreira.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Chief Moreira did highlight in his words that training and equipment are very important. And you'll be able to oversight this. You'll have a body that'll oversight it. I'm just wondering, would that include body cameras for all local police? Would you like to see that in the equipment?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, Chief, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: Thank you, Chair. Through you, I'm struggling right now to think of a police service that doesn't have body-worn cameras. But yes, your—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Moreira: Except for Niagara region, of course.

We're well into it. I think that as it comes to the specific types of equipment, it will depend, jurisdiction by jurisdiction, because there are costs that are associated to it.

I can tell you that the government has continued to ask us about the equipment needs that we have to address all sorts of crimes. And this one here, specifically, it was in relation to the pill press legislation, the precursors. Some of the specialized equipment that we would need is to remove some of those toxic substances that come, because there's further powers that are granted to us to search and seize these drugs. My comments were in relation to that, not body-worn cameras.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm just going to ask you: So you agree that service boards should look into improving public safety by giving help—or the province should look into police service boards, sorry, and helping improve safety throughout all communities. Would you agree with that? Instead of taking the direction from the minister, would you be able to work hand in hand, may I say, and making that highlighted?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: Thank you, Chair. Through you: I would say that certainly this is already happening today in the province. The government has been very attuned to the public safety needs and has supported—I know in my municipality alone, we've received tens of millions of dollars in provincial grants to address specific emerging threats that are not just in our jurisdiction but right across the province. Take carjackings and the car thefts—we recently announced the receiving of a \$10.5-million helicopter, for instance, to address these very issues. So those things are already happening today.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have a minute and 25 seconds left.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Oh, that's a lot of time. Thank you, Chair.

We're going to be going into estimates as well, and I'm going to take the opportunity—and I apologize; my colleagues will be asking the other two questions in our second round. I would like to take the opportunity, going into estimates this week with the Solicitor General—and really highlighting what it is that you are looking for in the registry that—you had spoke about schedule 3. Can you highlight what gaps you'd like to see filled or funded? Do you want me to read it out?

Mr. Peter Moreira: Yes, just point me specifically to the—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It says here, "Schedule 3 also provides for the creation of a high-risk offenders list to be made publicly available by 2027. This list would be based on federal or prescribed offence convictions and is meant to be in the public interest."

I'm just wondering, how would you like to see the Solicitor—I'm going to give you the opportunity to see how that can roll out forward to and what kind of gaps would you like to see—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): That concludes the time for this round for the official opposition.

MPP Stevens, maybe one of your colleagues might want to put that question in the second round.

We're now going to the third party. MPP McCrimmon, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you for being here today. I really appreciate this. This matters greatly to me.

I'm going to start with Chief Moreira. Did the government consult with you before including the provision on issuing directives to police services bureau?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Chief, to the question, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: I appreciate the question.

Through you, Chair: The government routinely speaks to us about a whole host of issues and speaks to police chiefs right across this province.

I can't recall a specific conversation with the Solicitor General about this very point, but we have talked about the priorities in coordinating grant funding and some of the investments from the government right across this province. So I see this as a natural progression out of those conversations.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: So if he hadn't consulted with you before—this is a pretty significant inclusion in this bill. That concerns me because he should have, and he should have spoken with you directly on it. But let's put that aside.

What should consultation look like, then? You mentioned it yourself, that in order to make this legislation—there are some good parts of this legislation. But you've intimated that consultation will make the difference about whether this is successful or not. What will that consultation look like?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, Chief, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: Thank you, Chair. Through you: That consultation reflects the creation in finalizing the regulations that will be the deciding factor in terms of how this is implemented. That consultation is something that is ongoing on a whole host of public safety issues today. And we just want to remind the government that we think it's important that they continue to speak to police leaders about this. While these are great steps, the regulations themselves are really where the power lies and where we can really leverage the good things in this act.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thanks, Chief. I appreciate that.

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How are you going to make sure that adequate safeguards are in place if we don't have all the information and it won't be available until a regulatory framework is issued?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: I believe it's the same way that most of the laws that come into play around public safety happen. The laws are passed and we find our path in terms of how to implement those changes that occur. We'll continue to provide feedback to the government—not just the provincial government, but the federal government as well, as it relates to the changes in public safety there.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Good. Thank you.

Okay—risks: I'm a risk analyst manager, so what risks do you see, especially with schedule 3 and the issuing of directives to police boards? What risks do you see? What are the possible risks that we could be—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: The PGO, the Police Governance Ontario, that represents the police service boards across the province may have a different view.

I just don't see the risk the way that they may see the risks. What I see are the opportunities to make sure that one municipality has the same access to the changes that are going to keep their community safe, so that we're not

displacing crime and we take a more coordinated effort. We do this in so many different areas. As it relates to setting priorities for police service boards, I think that the only risk would be a priority that would be set without any consultation whatsoever or ability to inform it.

But I can tell you that these are ongoing conversations that we have all the time with the Solicitor General.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Chief Fordy, there are new powers in this bill, and you talked about how we are actually going to turn this bill into a new capacity. So, if you get the authorities, what are the additional guidance you're going to need, the additional equipment you're going to need, the training you're going to need? What are those kinds of things that we need to keep in mind as we're working through this bill?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Chief Fordy, to the question, please.

Mr. Bill Fordy: Thank you for your question. Through you, Chair, I think with respect to the pill presses and the precursors there's also a risk for our police officers in the handling and managing of those exhibits.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute left.

Mr. Bill Fordy: So I would look for training on how to safely manage those exhibits so that our officers aren't further placed at risk.

And then the other comment I would make with respect to risks: I would like to see continued discussion with the provincial government around local and provincial funding priorities. If there was inconsistency between those two, that would be a risk.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

MPP McCrimmon, you've got 33 seconds left.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm good, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right, thank you.

And now with the government, please. Who has a question? MPP Gualtieri, please.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Good day. I'd like to address the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Chief Fordy and Chief Moreira.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, I appreciate your leadership as an association who serves with the RCMP, the OPP, First Nations and municipal police services.

From your perspective, how would the proposed Pill Presses and Precursors Act of 2026 impact enforcement of illicit drug production for police services?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Bill Fordy: Thank you for your question. I believe that this framework would allow for, as I referenced earlier, our officers to safely seize drugs. This would allow for dangerous, illicit drugs to come off the street, take them out of the hands of many vulnerable persons, and would also disrupt the criminal enterprise that benefits from the production of these illicit drugs.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for that response.

New question, please. MPP Ciriello.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Thank you to all the speakers for being here today.

My question is going to be to the chiefs of police. Chief Fordy, you mentioned it a little bit at the end of your opening remarks. You started to touch on restraining orders, and so my question is going to focus on that, and I welcome additional input as well.

We know that harm and violence don't recognize provincial borders by any stretch of the imagination. Individuals fleeing violence, they're seeking protection; they often rely on restraining orders. It's a tool, put simply, to keep them safe. We also know that, if they're victims of human trafficking, they relocate often. And when they relocate often, the regulations require them to get a new restraining order when they come into Ontario for enforcement.

This amendment to Bill 119 would allow restraining orders issued anywhere in Canada to be enforceable right here in Ontario. How would this benefit victims in your own communities or across Ontario as an important public safety measure?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Chief Fordy, please.

Mr. Bill Fordy: Through you, Chair: Thank you for your question.

As you referenced, crime knows no boundaries, so the tools that we put in place to bring persons responsible for offences also, I would respectfully suggest, should know no boundaries.

By putting this sort of a process in place to allow for persons that are subject of judicial orders—in a manner that law enforcement can work collaboratively, eliminate those barriers to try to keep, oftentimes, our victims safe, I think, is an enhancement.

MPP Monica Ciriello: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. Go ahead, please, Chief. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Moreira: When we think about the court time it's going to save when we don't have to enter in a long process to get these things enforceable here in Ontario, all of this just makes sense, and it's a long time coming.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Chief.

MPP Allsopp, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: My question is for Dora Habashi. Dora, thank you so much for being here today. It's great to see you again. Thank you for the incredible work you've done for nearly two decades in supporting victims and protecting children.

You talked in your opening address about the need for a well-regulated adoption system in Ontario and how some of the changes that we presented in Bill 119, that we're putting forward, would help keep kids safer, particularly the comprehensive home studies, some of the changes in schedule 5. Could you tell us a little bit more about how some of the changes that we're making in Bill 119 will go further to make sure that kids are safe?

Ms. Dora Habashi: Yes, I would love to.

Any system removing children from their birth families should be regulated. To have approved practitioners who

are licensed through the safe home study model, which is the adoption model that practitioners use in Ontario, is critical because there is training behind that. There are regulations for the practitioners to be aware of what questions to ask, and it's through that very framework that we know the right questions are being asked. So that would be one example.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you very much.

Ms. Dora Habashi: Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question? MPP Darouze, please. Thank you. You've got one minute, 51 seconds.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you, Chair and through you, I want to thank the presenters for being here. I really appreciate your participation this morning and also the input you've been putting through the consultation with our government.

My question will be for both chiefs, Chief Fordy and Chief Moreira. I want to thank you both for your service and thank you very much for being part of this Bill 119. I understand how critical this is. I know my chief, Chief Stubbs, speaks so highly of all the chiefs in Ontario, and I know he works very closely with you, and I understand this is important for our community.

We can elaborate a little bit more, but you mentioned something in your speech—that you're interested in schedule 3. I'm wondering if there are other aspects of Bill 119 that our police leaders are interested in and if you can highlight a little bit more about that, because Bill 119 has lots of information to impact here today, but we're very—this committee is interested to hear if there is any more that we can hear from both of you. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Forty-eight seconds left.

Mr. Bill Fordy: Thank you for your question.

Very quickly, one of the things that it contains is enhancing the RCMP out-of-province police officer powers. I think that's an enhancement to our service delivery.

We are engaged in several joint-force operations; I spend a lot of time on integrated teams in British Columbia. To give the RCMP officers that authority in Ontario, I think, strengthens them as an organization and strengthens all of us as well.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response. That ends the questions from the government.

We'll move now to the second round of questioning, starting with the official opposition, with MPP Glover, please.

1340

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, everybody, for being here today and presenting. This is a really important bill, and we need to get it right.

I came in today because I have questions on two things: one, around the community safety and especially around gun and gang violence, but also on human trafficking. I'll start with the human trafficking.

Just for my colleagues who may not be aware, Richard Dunwoody started a program called Project Recover when he was volunteering in shelters in the community that we

both live in. What he was finding in those shelters—and correct me if I don't get the story quite right here, Richard—was that there were a lot of survivors of human trafficking, and they could not get out of the shelter because their credit rating had been destroyed. The traffickers had taken out credit cards in their name, they'd taken out OSAP loans—like any way that they could financially exploit them, as well as all the physical and sexual exploitation.

Richard's background is in banking, so he started to work with the banks to have those fraudulent debts removed from their credit rating. And then, he worked with four of us, actually; it was an all-party bill, Bill 41, to remove fraudulent debts from survivors of human trafficking. It was a really important bill. The implementation has taken much longer. And so, it seems like Bill 119 is moving that further, but there's still some things that we need to get right if we're actually going to serve the survivors.

Richard, I was taking notes as you were speaking, and I came up with a few different things. If you could just clarify or correct if I don't have them right.

One, is that you need—whatever agency is in charge of removing the fraudulent debts, they need a certification process, a level of competency, in order to do it.

They also need to have an approved process that they would be following, so they would know whether the steps are being followed to remove those debts.

You're also suggesting that right now, the way the bill is worded, it would only be victim services that they could go to. But you're suggesting that some survivors do not feel comfortable with victim services, and so that there would be other agencies allowed to also serve survivors to remove these fraudulent debts.

The final thing that I got down was to fix the credit ratings. So it's not enough just to remove the fraudulent debt; you also need to fix the credit rating for those fraudulent debts.

Those four—is that a good summary of what you're asking for? Or could you clarify? Could you correct?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Mr. Dunwoody, to the question, please. Thank you.

Mr. Richard Dunwoody: Absolutely, and certification, I think, is just a common-sense approach to ensure that survivors have qualified people representing and supporting them.

The process that was in place for what I did was approved by all of the financial institutions—not just banks, telecoms, utility companies etc.—and it was a documented process flow. The automated system that I built, and the application that I built and I funded, is still being used by Victim Services Toronto today. And so, if that process works for any organization like Victim Services Toronto and works for me, I think it's a standard process. The banks now have the comfort level that they know what the process is, as opposed to trying to guess in that process.

Don't take it from me; take it from Victim Services Toronto's own employees that sat before this committee, that verified that some survivors will not go through victim

service units in Ontario anywhere for support, for fear and for certain reasons. I'm not saying that that's right. I'm not saying that there's substantive stuff behind it or putting it on Victim Services Toronto. What I'm saying is that takes away the choice of a survivor, and trafficking is all about choices. And while Victim Services Toronto took over the Project Recover initiative and I left, I've had to, over the last three years, continue supporting survivors that will not go through Victim Services Toronto. I don't think that's right. I think there should be another advocacy agency in that. And I'm going to be honest; I've heard too many stories already from these young people. I don't want to hear any more, okay?

Mr. Chris Glover: That's good. Thank you very much. We'll be proposing amendments to the bill, so we'll try to incorporate some of your suggestions in those amendments. I hope the government will support those.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute, 24 seconds, sir.

Mr. Chris Glover: I did want to ask a bit about community safety. My son—three of his classmates have been killed in acts of gun violence, just from high school. And I appreciate the work that the police did. They've arrested the guy who shot his best friend.

But at the same time, I've done a lot of work, and I've worked with survivors of gun violence and also with former gang members. And one of the things they say is that if you want to make communities safer, it's not just that the police arrest somebody who's got a gun, who's committed a crime, but that there's nobody else waiting to take that gun in that gang—that we've got to make sure that young people are not joining gangs.

So they're talking about, like, we need to reduce our class sizes in our schools. We need to fix OSAP so that students don't have to take on massive debts to go to school. They're talking about bringing back—community youth workers are being cut from the TDSB right now. They're saying that we need those adults in the schools so that there is an adult—a mentor—in the schools.

Would you agree that the police are not the only response? If we want to make our communities safer and reduce crime and reduce the number of young people entering gangs, then we need to provide young people—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you for the question.

We're now going to move to the third party for their questions. MPP McCrimmon, please, when you're ready.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: You can finish your question.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): No. You had your question, and now we're at the third party. Let's move on.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: The combination of Bill 10 and Bill 119 could mean that we will end up having non-police officers authorized to carry firearms, whether that's transit constables or whether it's private security guards. Tell me what you see as the risks and threats of going down that particular road.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: You said Bill 10?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Yes.

Mr. Peter Moreira: I'm sorry; I haven't read the bill—

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Well, what it could mean is that people other than police officers will be authorized by politicians to carry firearms. What risks are involved there?

Mr. Peter Moreira: Okay, so I think I know. I apologize, because I believe I understand the piece of legislation that you're talking about.

First of all, I think that as it relates to security officers, it's in relation to a specific place and where their authorities would happen, is my understanding of the proposed legislation.

I can tell you that police officers are heavily regulated and trained, obviously, to a very high standard. Plus, we have a robust oversight system that exists to hold police officers accountable. And we also have an Inspectorate of Policing that will define what adequate and effective policing actually is in the province. So I don't think that there is a substitute for that.

Asking me to compare the two bills—I think they're independent of one another, and I really haven't given the kind of thought I would need or the thoughtful consideration to properly answer your question.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: The kind of combination, when I read them, means that we can have people other than police officers actually carrying legal firearms, and we can have politicians actually making the decision of who will get to carry firearms or not.

I was military for 31 years. I know the training, and I know what it takes. I had to qualify in the long gun and the pistol every year and make sure I was—the training, the standards, the oversight. If we allow people other than police officers to carry firearms, who's going to do all that work?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Again, I just want to remind the members that we're here to discuss Bill 119, so any comparison to other legislation that's either pending or has been deliberated on is not relevant here today. It's Bill 119—you don't need to respond.

New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: What specifically in Bill 119 that I object to is politicians will be able to decide who can carry a firearm and who can't. Do you agree with that?
1350

Mr. Peter Moreira: I didn't read that in Bill 119.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Yes, it's in there. It gives the cabinet the ability to actually prescribe certain groups that will be allowed to carry firearms.

Mr. Peter Moreira: Within schedule 3?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I don't know exactly where it is. Schedule 3?

Mr. Peter Moreira: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP McCrimmon, I'm going to interject here. I don't believe what you're referring to is in schedule 3. I don't believe it's in the bill.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It's a piece of one. You're right; it's not in the bill. But if you add everything up together and—okay, so we'll switch over then to SIU.

Let's talk about SIU. If we're going to have people who are going to expand who is subject to that review, and there's also going to be an ability to actually restrict who's subject to SIU, how are we going to make sure that the SIU is going to have the freedom to do the investigations they need to do when that can be changed at the whim of a politician's pen?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Peter Moreira: In terms of the special investigations unit, I think the policing services are well regulated under the SIU act. We have a clear line of demarcation in terms of who is included and who is not included.

The most I can answer that question is in relation to our own members and not beyond that because we have no area of responsibility on those. The SIU now can investigate things that are in the public interest as well, that was included in the last case. I think it's up to them to make that decision through the regulations.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute left.

Mr. Peter Moreira: The notion that the politicians are making these decisions—well, politicians make all the decisions in terms of the laws that we have and the regulations that we all act on. So by extension, this already exists today and works, I think, fairly well with the checks and balances that are in place, with all the regulatory processes that we have, like the SIU, like the inspector of policing and others that regulate policing today.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response.

MPP McCrimmon, we only have 27 seconds left. I think we will move on to the government.

For reference purposes, the question on the special investigations unit is found in section 14 of the bill before us today.

To the government members. MPP Sarrazin, please, to the question.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: My question will be for the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

Before I ask my question, I just want to say to Dora and Richard, the reason we're not asking too many questions is because we did get a lot of answers on that last deputation. The people who were here from Victim Services Toronto gave us a lot of information about the Reclaim program and how it will affect—and I just wanted to state that. Don't hold it against us.

First of all, I'm sad to hear that our Chair couldn't get a ride on the helicopter. He was there and he told us about the good news, I think.

I sat, myself, as a mayor in the past on the police board and I just want to say that it's great to be able to work with you now as a government official and before as a municipal leader. We've talked about all these issues, of course, and now what Bill 119 is bringing. I would like you to tell us, what are the impacts of earlier intervention on community safety and overdose prevention—if you want to talk about that? Whoever—you can both answer, actually.

Mr. Bill Fordy: Thank you for your question. Through you, Chair: I think in any sort of law enforcement capacity,

any time we can get upstream, the data that I've read is one dollar spent on intervention results in \$7 in savings downstream. For us, in an environment where every dollar matters, we're trying to be as efficient as we can with the spending of public monies. Allowing us to engage in intervention will save our community in the long term and help us provide a better service delivery across all spectrums.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. MPP Gualtieri.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: I'd like to pivot a bit and address Dora Habashi as the registered social worker with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. Dora, from a social work perspective, how can financial recovery support long-term survivor well-being?

Ms. Dora Habashi: Are you asking specific to the amendments for the adoption act, or are we talking about human trafficking?

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Maybe you could touch a little bit on both if you have time?

Ms. Dora Habashi: Sure. When I think of the changes to schedule 5, good practice would ensure that families also have a transparent process when they move through adoption, one that has integrity. And so some of the changes that the schedule is offering or introducing are also allowing the provincial directors to intervene earlier. If transparency is at any point not clear, a provincial director would be able to have those conversations and ensure that, for example, a birth parent's consent is direct, clear, there was no financial incentive attached, there's no undue financial gain throughout that process. So, to offer the directors the authority early on is important because they can intervene earlier.

As I mentioned when I was answering Tyler's questions, when you have an approved practitioner, they're also asking those questions. So, through the adoption process, you would ensure that it has integrity and there is no financial incentive or undue financial gain through that process, because the right people have the authority to ask those questions.

In terms of human trafficking, I would say you transfer the same kind of knowledge over. When you have the right people asking the questions, the correct individuals with the authority, they can be screening and asking the appropriate questions throughout the continuum.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. MPP Ciriello.

MPP Monica Ciriello: My question is going to be to Dora as well. Thank you very much for bringing your expertise to the table here today, and again, thank you so much for everything you do each and every day, sometimes engaging with folks on the worst day of their lives. So thank you very much.

Mine's a little bit more of a broad question for you, but I think you bring a really interesting perspective to the table. What are the key justice and public safety issues facing Ontario right now, from your expertise?

Ms. Dora Habashi: Well, I would love to keep it in terms of my expertise with schedule 5, because I bring a

lot of passion in that respect. I think something government could consider with these regulations is that there's The Hague Convention, right? A country that is part of The Hague Convention typically will have a centralized adoption authority in that country. And so when I think of risk to community with international adoptions, if we are engaging in international adoptions with countries that aren't, for example, part of The Hague Convention, there is risk there, because on the other side in that particular country, there might not be a governing authority or a governing body that's overseeing adoption. That does bring risk because we don't know what's happening on the other side.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute.

Ms. Dora Habashi: I think, as well, the regulations could also look at utilizing other federal partners or international bodies. Ontario doesn't have to necessarily make the decision in isolation because, when I think of international adoption, there's also Citizenship Canada and Global Affairs—those federal bodies will also have access to information that a provincial director would not.

So, when I think of risk to community, it's important that we are approaching it from a more collaborative, holistic viewpoint when we are moving families through an adoption process.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. We have about 25 seconds left, and I don't think you're going to have enough time to put the question and get the answer. There you go.

So I'm going to thank our witnesses today for being with us.

CADILLAC FAIRVIEW
COMMUNITY SAFETY COUNCIL
OF CANADA
NATIONAL POLICE FEDERATION

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Now I will call forward representatives from Cadillac Fairview, the Community Safety Council of Canada and the National Police Federation.

Thank you all for your work today.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Committee members, I need you back in your seats, please. We have 2 o'clock delegations.

1400

I'd like to call forward, please, representatives from Cadillac Fairview, the Community Safety Council of Canada and the National Police Federation. If you're here in the room, please attend the table in front of me. Thank you. We have a representative from Cadillac Fairview on the screen. Thank you.

Make yourselves comfortable. Move the microphone closer to you so we can all hear you and people who are viewing on TV can hear you and people with hearing challenges can hear you as well. Thank you.

The representatives from Cadillac Fairview, welcome. For the record, please, if you could identify yourselves for Hansard. You have seven minutes for your presentation. I will cut you off if you go longer than seven. Thank you very much. Please start your presentation.

Mr. Alex Maduro: Good morning, Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. My name is Alex Maduro, vice-president of national security operations for Cadillac Fairview. I'm joined today by my colleague Luke Robertson, vice-president of development and government affairs.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Alex Maduro: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Alex Maduro: Cadillac Fairview is a major owner, operator and developer of retail, office, multi-family residential and industrial properties across Ontario. Our footprint includes major office towers, residential communities, industrial properties and flagship retail destinations like the CF Toronto Eaton Centre, CF Sherway Gardens and CF Fairview Mall. Ensuring these properties remain safe, welcoming environments for the tens of millions of visitors, tenants and workers is our highest priority.

Cadillac Fairview strongly supports Bill 119. Organized retail theft has evolved into sophisticated and violent criminal operations, driving a surge in trespassing, theft and disturbances across commercial properties. We commend the province for taking decisive action by establishing dedicated organized retail theft prosecution teams, advocating to treat assaults against security guards as aggravating factors in federal sentencing and extending public drug enforcement authority to transit special constables at connected hubs, which will impact a number of major CF destinations like the Toronto Eaton Centre, Toronto-Dominion Centre and CF Rideau Centre in Ottawa.

Similarly, we strongly endorse the government's initiative to explore automated licence plate recognition technology on major provincial highways to combat organized retail theft networks. Expanding highway ALPR capability provides a critical tool to intercept fleeing theft rings.

Turning to schedule 10, which amends the Private Security and Investigative Services Act, 2005, Cadillac Fairview supports to modernize guard licensing, introduce digital credentials and clearly define plainclothes loss-prevention specialists.

As the ministry explores potential tiered licensing and specialized training standards for complex retail and commercial environments, we encourage the government to continue to work closely with large institutional real estate owners and managers, given that the operational realities and security needs of major commercial hubs differ significantly across the real estate sector.

It is critical that new regulatory standards remain operationally practical, scalable and focused on security outcomes without creating unnecessary administrative burdens or liability risks for property managers across office, residential, industrial and retail portfolios.

Likewise, regarding measures to address illegal drug activity on commercial premises, we support targeting negligent property owners. However, regulations must ensure that responsible commercial landlords who exercise active lease management and due diligence are protected from unfair liability for unauthorized tenant conduct.

To maximize the impact of Bill 119 and build on our previous policy submissions to government, we respectfully recommend maintaining the retail theft tranche of the Community Safety and Policing Grant and the mobile crisis response team grant. These grants have allowed for the opening of a community safety hub at CF Masonville Place in London as well as health-led outreach programs like the CORE team, a joint Toronto Police Service and Toronto Public Health initiative based out of CF Toronto Eaton Centre, which welcomes over 50 million visitors annually.

Whether it's an office tower, a residential complex, an industrial facility or a shopping centre complex, private properties that serve the public require a seamless partnership between property owners and operators, private security, police services and the provincial justice system. Bill 119 is a step forward in establishing the enforcement tools and legal framework needed to protect our communities, support Ontario businesses and maintain public order.

Thank you for your time, and we welcome any questions from the committee.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir. Stand by, we'll have questions after the other delegations—two rounds of questions. We'll come back to you.

All right, I'll go next to the Community Safety Council of Canada and Cyrille Brown, who's the director of operations. You have seven minutes, sir. You can start.

Mr. Cyrille Brown: Good afternoon, Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 119 today.

My name is Cyrille Brown and I serve as the director of operations at the Community Safety Council of Canada, a national non-profit organization focused on strengthening community safety and resilience through research, education, program development and evidence-informed policy contributions.

Our work includes BubbleZones.ca, a platform the CSCC developed and maintains to help communities in Toronto, Vaughan, Oakville and Brampton understand, access and effectively implement protections available to their vulnerable sites. This is one example of our policy work on the ground, and, through engaging with affected communities, has helped us identify where further gaps remain.

Today, we speak in support of Bill 119 and commend the province for taking these initiatives. We will be speaking specifically to how policing priorities are set, how security guards are trained and where community safety volunteers fit into this framework. Why does this matter?

The statistics are alarming. Statistics Canada reports that police-reported hate crime has risen by 169% since 2018. Violent hate crime targeting religion has more than doubled between the 2021 and 2024 reporting periods,

with Ontario recording the highest provincial rate in 2024. These trends are placing increasing pressure on police resources while exposing licensed security professionals to more frequent, complex and dangerous deployments.

Two weeks ago, on the eve of Yom Kippur, a gunman opened fire outside the Sons of Jacob synagogue in Belleville, Ontario. Bullets struck the building while worshippers were still inside. We are grateful to Constable Jeff Smith, whose brave response helped protect the congregation, and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

In preparation for today's appearance, the CSCC conducted a rapid community consultation inviting institutional leaders, security professionals, safety volunteers and the broader community to share lived experience relevant to Bill 119. One Sons of Jacob congregant told us, "My biggest concern is very simple. I want to be able to bring my children to a synagogue or Jewish celebration without wondering whether doing so is putting them at risk." This concern is not limited to any one community. Houses of worship and vulnerable institutions serving people of all faiths today face threats, intimidation and violence.

Accordingly, CSCC offers three recommendations relating to Bill 119.

First, schedule 3, section 3.1, empowers the minister to set priorities that police service boards must reflect in their strategic plans. We support that authority, provided priorities are evidence-led and reflect data-informed trends affecting communities.

Because section 39(5.3) removes the usual consultation steps when a board advises its plan to comply with a directive, we recommend that the minister require scheduled consultation with affected communities, police leadership and qualified safety organizations as part of the process before issuing a directive.

Directives should also be published to improve transparency and support ongoing impact review. Priorities set without these voices risk missing the people they are intended to protect.

Second, relating to schedule 10: Section 4 makes completion of minister-approved training meeting prescribed requirements a condition of licensing. We ask that the regulations use this opportunity and authority to create a graduated training and licensing framework that more accurately reflects the range of deployments across the security profession, from general guarding to enhanced protective services and, where lawful and appropriate, specialized armed protection.

1410

The gap between what licensed guards are trained and equipped to do and the risks they face is growing. Guards positioned as visual deterrents may find themselves facing hostile crowds, targeted harassment and serious violence during their deployments. Assignments carry different risks, and we recognize that, so each level should be developed with the appropriate bodies. Enhanced and specialized training should include scenario-based exercises, annual requalification, emergency medical response, police

coordination and approved defensive equipment, including ballistic protection.

The CSCC recognizes that firearms law is federal and that lawful armed-security scenarios already exist in Ontario to protect property. We ask that the need to protect life also be considered. We are not proposing a general right for guards to carry firearms. Any pathway must be narrow, risk-based and subject to rigorous screening, training, recertification, oversight, insurance and accountability. It must also be clear, timely and workable in practice.

For today's discussion of Bill 119, our ask is that the licensing framework make room for the training and standards required for these tiers. The principle is simple: An increase in threat requires a higher capability of response, which in turn requires a higher standard of screening, training and accountability. When illegal firearms are used to intimidate and harm communities, public policy cannot begin and end with the condolences after an attack. We owe the licensed security and law enforcement professionals standing between a threat and the public the preparation and equipment necessary to deliver effective protection and return them home safely.

Third, also related to schedule 10, the bill removes "primarily" from the definition of a security guard. Because that definition covers paid work, it will reach anyone paid to guard or patrol, even as part of broader duties. This makes the distinction between regulated guarding and volunteer or casual security roles even more important. Through our consultation, we heard that paid-duty policing can be costly, requested shifts can go unfilled and many institutions cannot afford professional protection as often as increasingly elevated risks require. This leaves communities vulnerable.

This is not a criticism of police. The CSCC recognizes the operational and budgetary pressures police services face. However, volunteers must not replace or interfere with the work of police or licensed guards as a makeshift solution. Without clear boundaries, training, insurance and escalation protocols, well-intentioned groups can drift into regulated work, complicate investigations and put themselves and their communities at risk. There is an opportunity here to address these trends before activities inconsistent with the PSISA become entrenched.

CSCC recommends these three actions:

(1) The registrar should provide a guidance on how the amended definition applies to stipend and part-time safety roles, with a transition period;

(2) The roles and limitations of three distinct layers should be defined and recognized, that being: certified safety volunteers, licensed security professionals and police;

(3) Government should work with the sector to design a coordinating hub that registers volunteer organizations, verifies screening and insurance of their participants, standardizes training to help ensure activities do not conflict with the PSISA, establishes police liaison protocols and offers a pathway into licensing and law enforcement education for those who want one.

Registration would help police identify what a volunteer's uniform or logo represents, who is involved and what their roles and limitations are. Ontario already requires Smart Serve certification to serve alcohol; comparable preparation is reasonable for the volunteers entering volatile settings. The goal is not private police or an alternative form of professional security. It is a coordinated ecosystem in which volunteers contribute lawfully, licensed professionals are properly trained and equipped and police retain responsibility for enforcement, investigation and operational command.

Our written submission sets out the standards and safeguards, which will be sent after today. Thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Mr. Brown. Mr. Flannery, please.

Mr. Patrick Flannery: Good afternoon, Chair, Vice-Chair and members of the committee. I thank you for the opportunity to appear today to speak with you.

My name is Patrick Flannery. I'm a board director of the National Police Federation. The National Police Federation is a certified bargaining unit of almost 20,000 members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police not of officer rank and includes over 2,000 members in Ontario alone who fall under my direct supervision there, union-wise. I'm a sergeant with the RCMP as well, with 32 years of service, initially posted to British Columbia, where I worked patrol duties, as well as several specialized units; and transferring to Ontario, where I worked drugs, border security and national security; and later transferred into criminal operations in London.

When the United States government first criticized the allegedly porous border between Canada and the United States, the RCMP began enhanced patrols in uniform in marked police cars throughout Canada, but especially Ontario. And on one of the first weekends, they received a call of a person down at the shore of the St. Clair River. They suspected they may have crossed the river or were waiting for someone. Our members went down there, and it didn't turn out to be something like that; it was a person who was suffering significant mental health challenges. They had no authority under law to act in that situation. They had no authority to detain that person nor to transport them to a psychological facility for any type of assessment.

Now, fortunately, they had both worked on patrol previously and were able to keep the person involved in conversation before awaiting the arrival of the OPP in the area. But had that not happened, there could have been significant challenges for our members.

I understand the complexity of policing in Ontario with a municipal, provincial and federal component to policing and the importance of a clear, practical authority when public safety issues arise unexpectedly.

Before turning to Bill 119, I wanted to acknowledge the government's efforts to strengthen officer safety. Ontario and Canada have experienced far too many line-of-duty police deaths. Since being elected to my position in 2022, I have been to 11 police funerals—and also, a number of injuries, including, as mentioned, Constable Jeff Smith,

who bravely stood in front of the group of people in the synagogue and took fire. Again, we wish him a speedy recovery.

Every one of those losses is felt deeply within the police organization, within their families, their friends, their neighbours and the entire community. When our members were shot in Saskatchewan about six months ago, the community rallied behind them, doing GoFundMes to assist with their rent because they weren't working etc.

So police officers and RCMP members recognize that serving the public carries an inherent risk. We don't accept that people actually act on that and are violent towards us, but we accept that it's an inherent risk of the job. Governments also have the responsibility to provide legal clarity, authorities, tools and supports necessary for police personnel to respond safely, effectively and with confidence in keeping Canadians safe.

The National Police Federation strongly supports schedule 3 of Bill 119 and its proposed new section 101.2 of the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019. This provision would authorize RCMP officers to exercise prescribed powers of a police officer under Ontario legislation, which they currently do not have, while regulations would specify the relevant statutes, including the Highway Traffic Act, the Trespass to Property Act and, like that first situation, the Mental Health Act and others.

This is a practical and much needed public safety measure that will help keep my NPF members and the citizens of Ontario safe. It does not expand the RCMP mandate or displace Ontario's municipal, provincial or Indigenous police forces. They are partners of ours and we expect them to continue with their duties without interference from us.

The role of the RCMP remains principally a federal policing role. That is our position as the NPF and the use of our members. This federal role is carried out every day in communities across Ontario, though most people don't actually see it until we recently started in the uniform and the marked cars. They investigate and disrupt organized crime, money laundering, firearms trafficking, financial crimes, cybercrime, human trafficking, border-related crime and threats to national security. These files are often national or international in scope, but their impacts are immediate and local.

Our members work in joint force operations alongside municipal, provincial and Indigenous police agencies. Policing does not pause neatly at a line of jurisdiction. There is no solid line between our jurisdictions. However, RCMP members regularly encounter situations for which they lack the authority to act.

In Ottawa, we have a traffic unit which patrols the areas controlled by the National Capital Commission. They're in Ontario and Quebec—the majority of it in Ontario. They have to travel the roads of Ontario and Ottawa to get to those locations and, often, they will be stopped at a stop sign, and a car will go through the red light right in front of them. They have no authority to stop that vehicle. Going through a red light does not meet the definition of dangerous driving in the Criminal Code; most traffic

offences don't. It's a significant departure from the norm, and those of you who have driven in Toronto know that that is actually the norm.

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In situations like that, people see a marked car. Now, in Ottawa they may be a little more attuned to seeing the police cars, the RCMP cars, because of the consulates and such. In Belleville, in Windsor, in Niagara Falls, we just look—not that it's “just”—but we look like another security car, because they don't recognize that. Or they think it's Niagara or Windsor police and they didn't stop that person for going through the stop sign.

Bill 119 gives our members the relevant provincial authority, allowing timely action while preserving the roles and accountability of provincial police services. It will improve legal certainty for our members, operational coordination among policing partners and Ontario's ability to draw—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, Mr. Flannery. Your time has concluded. Everyone got seven minutes to make their presentation.

We are now moving forward to questions from the official opposition for 6.5 minutes. I'll let you know when you've got one minute left. Then we'll move to the third party and then the government.

MPP Wong-Tam, your questions please. Thank you.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you to all the presenters who are here in the room. We very much appreciate you taking the time to be here. To our friends and colleagues at Cadillac Fairview, welcome to you as well.

My question is going to be first directed to Cadillac Fairview. Specifically, I know that the issue around organized crime and organized retail crime and theft has become very, very prevalent. It's occupying a lot of time for the corporation. I certainly recognize that more can be done, and there are some very important steps here in Bill 119.

I'm hoping you can provide some comments on how the specialized prosecution teams established under this bill—whether or not it's going to change how Cadillac Fairview coordinates its security in facilities such as CF Eaton Centre based on these new specialized prosecution teams.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Alex Maduro: Thank you for the question. Cadillac Fairview maintains a robust and comprehensive physical security program that spans a number of pillars. Certainly, security guards form an important and integral part of that security plan.

I think the real benefit of dedicated prosecution teams to deal with organized crime and organized retail crime really lies in the ability of the government to meaningfully impact criminal networks and their ability to operate.

Far too often, what our retail partners see and what commercial real estate operators see is very organized retail crime networks operating interprovincially across Ontario. They do so in a way that makes it very difficult for prosecution teams to be able to, I think, meaningfully charge and incarcerate individuals responsible for these crimes. We've seen, for example, individuals leveraging

the 401 corridor to commit crimes through various jurisdictions. It is difficult for prosecution teams to be able to link those crimes to the same organization or to the same group, sometimes with limited ability to share information cross-jurisdictionally. Moreover, individuals are being detained and charged with crimes that in and of themselves are not incredibly serious, but certainly when you look at the pattern of crimes committed by these individuals or these groups, they show a much more serious, much more dangerous network of operations that's being undertaken.

What we see is that dedicated retail crime prosecution would certainly have the level of expertise required to be able to really identify the activities that are happening on the surface—but also below the surface—and be able to prosecute those crimes in a much more effective way.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much. I have a couple more quick follow-up questions.

Will Bill 119's focus on repeat offenders somehow change the way Cadillac Fairview would issue enforceable provincial trespass bans against these high-risk individuals?

Mr. Alex Maduro: I don't think it's going to change the way we issue trespass notices, but what it will do is provide more tools to the government and stronger sentencing around some of that activity.

We certainly see the vast majority of visitors to our property are visiting our property with the correct intention, frankly, and wanting to visit these flagship properties as a place to gather and visit and shop. It is a small number of repeat offenders that cause the most amount of friction to commercial real estate operators and of course our retail partners.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I recognize that the only way these strategies to combat organized crime, especially when it comes to high retail theft is through coordination and resourcing of enforcement through the prosecution and the courts, if they're well run and we get to a conviction in a timely fashion.

Because it requires coordination, I think that the government had talked about—at the release of Bill 119, that there was going to be some type of task force, a retail theft task force. There's no provision in Bill 119 for the creation of that task force. Would that task force be helpful?

Mr. Alex Maduro: Task forces—yes. High-level answer: Yes, I think that would be helpful.

I don't want to say that that work is not happening as a result of that inclusion not existing in Bill 119. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has a subcommittee on retail crime and organized retail crime. I'm a member of that committee. Sean Sportun, the head of Crime Stoppers, is chairing that committee.

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

Mr. Alex Maduro: The work around bringing commercial real estate operators, bringing our retail partners, bringing police and prosecution teams and government together—that is happening, and it's something that is going to continue to happen. We're going to continue to work together to try to drive provincial crime prevention strategies forward.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Just very quickly, who owns that table? And who does it report to? How does accountability measure?

Mr. Alex Maduro: The committee actually just passed their charter a few weeks ago. It's a subcommittee within the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. They are going to report their findings up to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, but also to the Ontario government, including the Solicitor General and Attorney General.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response.

We're going to move on to the third party with MPP McCrimmon, please, when you're ready.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm going to ask you both the same question, so it will give you time to prepare who wants to start first.

This is a step in the right direction. I'm getting that impression. What are the next steps? Where do we go from here?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Mr. Patrick Flannery: For the National Police Federation, from our perspective?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Yes.

Mr. Patrick Flannery: Anything that brings about safety for our members—and I say “members.” The bill says “officers,” but the RCMP Act calls us “members,” so that would be a recommendation if we could just make that one little word change.

That's our concern: the safety of our members, both physical safety and in terms of protections under the law. So giving us those provincial authorities gives us the authority to act. And if something did happen, we can fall back on what allowed us to act on that.

Continued improvements in that direction—you would probably be best to consult with the RCMP in terms of their operational needs. I'm concerned about my NPF members.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I think that's a good answer—consult.

How do we do a better job of actually consulting with you and your members to make sure that we do come up with bills that actually achieve what you need in order to protect the safety of your members and protect the safety of the general public?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: The NPF is a new organization. We were only allowed to unionize from 2016. We were prohibited by law prior to that, so we only stood up in 2020. Federally, I know two years we were the top lobby group.

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Info@npf-fpn.com, and we'll have somebody call and ask what you need and how we can help. We're a very collaborative organization. We're not the traditional long-shoremen's union from the 1930s where we're banging heads with management. We work with management because every time we make something better for the RCMP, we make it better for our members. That's our

approach. We're happy to consult on anything we can. If we can contribute, we'd love to.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Thank you very much.

To you, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Cyrille Brown: Thank you for the question. I think the reasonable response is on the same trend of continued engagement. There are multiple points of discussion as part of our submission today. From what we've heard from the very important submissions around the table today, nothing would be able to be solved in a single conversation. I think continued engagement with the powers that be, asking the right questions, taking back the considerations that are being tabled here today and coming back with meaningful next steps that we can help to deliver a community voice to would be our next step.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I must admit there was something you mentioned, and I'm kind of going—specialized armed protection. That is something. Specialized armed protection—describe that. What is that?

Mr. Cyrille Brown: Just to take a step back, firearms-related activity is handled federally, but there is licensed armed security in Ontario currently, and it's currently available for property. It's available for property of a significant value—so usually like an armed vehicle transporting money, goods of high value.

What we're asking for consideration today is: A framework exists, and life is a value—that we consider life being a value in that same value proposition.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay. Copy.

All right. So run me through—when you have an armed security guard looking after high-value shipments, let's say, how do you train them? How do you make sure they keep their standards high enough where they're using firearms? And how do you make sure you're hiring the right people to do that kind of work? Give us that confidence.

Mr. Cyrille Brown: These are great questions. Those belong to other organizations. But we are recommending exactly what you're asking, which is the advance screening, pre-screening to make sure that people who would be even participating in the application process have been screened—mental health, background checks etc., similar to any other vulnerable sector that they'll be engaging with.

The training that's required would be a form of that continued engagement that we mentioned, where we would look to speak with law enforcement to have guidance as to what the best practices are for them to have. Because right now, in the application that is used for property, it is different than if we're talking about in different environments.

So training and engagement—those different needs will be part of that process to bring it forth to fruition. And it would be a multi-agency discussion, not just for us to provide insight into it. It would be part of a federal conversation with the CFO as well—RCMP, police boards and the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute left, MPP McCrimmon, for questions.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Can you tell me, how do you integrate using your unpaid volunteers and your paid? How do you make sure that that works, that that communication is there?

Mr. Cyrille Brown: Beautiful and very important question. That's why today we suggested that first there is a recognized identification that a certified safety volunteer is a layer different from the licensed security professional. That way, the correct approach to providing training, certification and ongoing engagement with that layer of safety can be created appropriately.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

It's now over to the government: MPP Allsopp, please, for your questions.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you to all the members who are here today to answer these questions. We significantly appreciate the effort it takes to get here and be part of a hearing like this.

My question is for Mr. Maduro from Cadillac Fairview. I've had the pleasure of visiting a number of your properties over the years, and to that extent I'm a product of the product. And every time I go to one of your facilities, I notice a significant number of security guards. In fact, given the number of properties that you have, I imagine you're one of the top employers of private security nationwide.

So the questions I wanted to ask you are: What are the challenges you see with your security guards and the act as it exists now? And what would the proposed changes to the Private Security and Investigative Services Act, including the modernization of oversight and licensing requirements—how would those benefit your organization?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Alex Maduro: Thank you for the question and more importantly, thank you for visiting Cadillac Fairview. It's always a pleasure to have you visit our properties.

You know, there's a couple of different aspects to responding to that question. I think first and foremost, large institutional properties like the Toronto Eaton Centre or Toronto-Dominion Centre aren't stand-alone buildings. They are multi-use, high-density civic hubs where retail, office, transit and public spaces all interconnect. Managing security across millions of square feet of real estate with tens of millions of visitors per year certainly requires specialized training programs. Cadillac Fairview had built an arguably best in class, frankly, training program for our security guards.

We see an opportunity here for the government to really emphasize the standardization of training across commercial real estate through these tiered licensing platforms. The fact of the matter is that stand-alone properties are very different than these interconnected hubs, and the risk that security guards face day in and day out is very different. One of the things that we have seen across the portfolio, across the province with absolute regularity is private security guards are often the first responders on site

when a disturbance or retail theft happens or some kind of violent action around one of our properties. In recent years, we've certainly seen even the traditional act of shoplifting change into coordinated, aggressive incidents where security personnel are facing increased verbal threats, physical intimidation and violence.

At the end of the day, security guards deserve to go home safely at the end of their shift. Recognizing that security guards in busy urban environments do have to deal with an array of risks today that they didn't have to in the past, it certainly makes sense to take a look holistically at the training that they receive end to end and to be able to graduate from one tier to another so that they can participate in and protect communities in much more busy, dynamic and fluid security environments and ensure that they're well prepared and well trained to be able to address those things appropriately.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you, sir.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. MPP Darouze.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you, Chair. Through you: I really appreciate the presentation this afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to be here to address our committee on Bill 119.

I want to ask Mr. Flannery a question concerning the Bill 119 and specifically on schedule 3, the Community Safety and Policing Act. From your perspective, how would the proposed amendment to the Community Safety and Policing Act improve the coordination between the RCMP and Ontario policing partners?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: That's a good question because it is important about working together with the other policing jurisdictions as well—I worked at Toronto international airport, where the Peel Regional Police are the police of jurisdiction—and how we work together and with the other agencies that are in the airport as well. It's a little microcosm of the province.

I think in having these authorities we would be able to act in situations where we would be able to also support those police of jurisdiction in different things. I know a number of years ago, I was on the riot team, the tactical troop, and we went to Queen's University for their homecoming. That's where it became very apparent that we were really unable to assist them because unless there was a criminal offence of an assault, everything else was covered under provincial acts. We were standing waiting for someone from Kingston Police or the OPP—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute.

Mr. Patrick Flannery: —to deal with liquor. So the RCMP would be able to support those institutions better.

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Being able to be on the border—you know, there are 14,000 kilometres of water border. We have boats in Cornwall, Kingston, Windsor and Sault Ste. Marie, and we patrol from the Manitoba border to the Quebec border with those boats. Having access to those authorities—and I would also include the ATV act—because most of it is rural area, it's wooded. You're not going to run into a lot of Chevy Novas. Being able to coordinate those efforts as

well and work with the provincial authorities and the municipal ones so that we could combine resources, I think that's the real benefit of it.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much. You're down to seven seconds, sir.

We're now going to start the—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Well, just in case you started a question, right?

We now are going to move to the second round of questions, with MPP Stevens, please, when you're ready.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you to all of our presenters here and also online.

This question will go to Patrick Flannery. Thank you for being here today, and thank you to the members you represent for keeping Canada safe as they do.

Bill 119 will allow RCMP officers and other prescribed peace officers from outside of Ontario to exercise police powers within Ontario. What safeguards do you think are needed to ensure clear accountability, consistent training and effective coordination between those officers and the Ontario police services? This is kind of twofold as well. And, most importantly, how do we make sure that this improves public safety without creating confusion for officers or the communities they serve?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: First, the NPF strongly believes in accountability of police. We believe in police oversight. We attend the CACOLE conference—that's the police oversight commission nationally. We attend that and contribute to that.

We don't defend the actions of our members. We defend the processes for dealing with things like misconduct etc. We believe that our members should be following the rules. The rules are set out for the public; the rules are set out for the police. You should be following those.

The RCMP has our own system of accountability under the RCMP code of conduct, and that's how members of the RCMP are held accountable. We're subject to the same criminal investigations as all the other police departments are, and we contract that out to other police agencies to investigate that at present.

The rules of engagement should be clear on any operation—so, for a G7 or a G20 that was in Toronto, another situation where our people didn't have the provincial authorities to act on a lot of stuff. But everyone has an assignment in policing. I don't like using the word "paramilitary," but the set-up for operations is very paramilitary. You're told what you need to do and what you need to accomplish, what's your mandate—and you follow that or the operation fails.

We aren't seeking to encroach on any other mandate; we're just seeking the authority to action provincial statutes which impact our members' ability to do their job. It's very compartmentalized in that way. I don't foresee members of the RCMP setting up RIDE checks throughout the province, right? That's not their job. They've always been able to deal with impaired drivers, but—all police operations are very organized.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: If I can follow up on that, we often hear governments talk about giving police more tools, may I say, in their tool box. But front-line officers will tell us that a tool is only useful if officers have the training to use that tool, the staffing to use that tool and resources to use it properly—correct?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: Yes.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: So does the National Police Federation believe that, within Bill 119, it should be accompanied with specific commitments around training? I'm not seeing it in this bill, so I'm just wondering if you believe we should see commitments around training, resources and interjurisdictional conditions. And if so, what would you want this government to commit to before these provisions are fully implemented?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: I can say that the RCMP, in their training in Regina—during the first six months, you receive training on a number of—not all provincial acts, of course, but it's geared towards contract policing, which is local police. The training involved in teaching someone how to use the Highway Traffic Act—or whatever it happens to be called in your province across the country—translates to most of the other provincial acts and most of the Criminal Code acts as well. Your process for investigating and following those is very similar.

There are a number of acts that end up with specific training, ordinarily online—for example, the migratory birds act. There isn't a session specifically on that, but there is an online course you can take if you so wish to learn about the migratory birds act.

Most of the provinces—we're pushing for all of them to do this, but most of them have published policing standards. Nova Scotia just recently came out with theirs. Newfoundland is in the process of introducing theirs. British Columbia has them. Ontario has them. Those are across the province, and that's what gives the, "This is how you do it, and these are the rules you have to follow when you're doing that."

Unfortunately, a lot of the American stories creep north. Policing in Canada is very—there's great education in policing.

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

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have 27 seconds, MPP Stevens. I don't know if you're going to get a question in and an answer in 27 seconds.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: No, but I will wish you a happy birthday again this afternoon in 27 seconds, then.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Well thank you. I appreciate that very much.

MPP McCrimmon, please, when you're ready.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'll start with Mr. Brown. I heard Mr. Flannery talk about consultation, collaboration and co-operation, and I'm sure you must have the same kind of ideas in the work that you do. Tell me how you bring that to life. How do you make sure that you are having that collaboration, that communication is happening with your communities that you're serving?

Mr. Cyrille Brown: That's actually the nature of what we are. We're the Community Safety Council of Canada. We provide that safe place for communities, organizational leaders, safety professionals, law enforcement, retired to come together and talk about the needs that are in front of them and to talk about it in a meaningful way where they can share best practices from what they've experienced in the field, sharing what their lived experiences are in their communities. Then they can come together with recommendations that are relevant to settings like today so that we can come forward and say, "Well, you know what? With regard to section 3.1," which we mentioned, the minister being able to provide that insight on strategy for policing—"we would like to make sure that there's the ability for consultation with the community as part of that conversation." That's what we do.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: When you've got everybody together, then you take that information and who do you share it with, the Solicitor General?

Mr. Cyrille Brown: The Solicitor General's office. We've had multiple conversations with the Solicitor General himself—very responsive and very good, meaningful conversations there—and other ministers at the provincial and federal levels who we have started a conversation with with regard to this safety volunteer education program, which is something that you asked about earlier, which is already something that we've done a lot of work on and is ready for the next step.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Flannery, I really appreciate the perspective you bring today because I think it's born from a great deal of experience and the idea that we need to be co-operating, collaborating and communicating. This is a good first step, allowing this. What's the next step?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: This issue, the inability to act on provincial authorities, was identified a number of years ago. I don't think it was dealt with effectively previously, and I believe the NPF began speaking with the minister's office about two years ago—it could be a little longer. We brought that forward as an issue and we focused on: What is the best way to deal with this issue?

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There are other processes but they're very disjointed and they're incomplete and they're messy. They're sloppy. They're not easy to manage or have any oversight of, which is very important on this.

So, in the discussions with mostly the deputy minister and staff, it evolved into this, as a very clean and effective way to bring clarity to the issue and to resolve the issue, and other than perhaps adding the ATV act as well to the list—I'd recommend that. I'll slip them in because I didn't get to that last page.

If something comes up, there's now a framework within the act to just add that in through the regulations, right? So it's been developed in a way that it's easy to expand and easy to add to, and take the same process for the next issue that's identified, and have that consultation and conversa-

tions and figure out what's the best way to do this. Maybe it is going through this same process as part III of Bill 119 is doing. Maybe it's a different process, but we now have a very good starting point, which is probably the most important thing.

How do I get out of the racing blocks? Because a lot of things in government, as the giant bureaucracy it is, get stuck in the starting blocks and don't really get the traction. We've gotten a lot of traction with this, and we have a great place to start for the next issue because there will be more issues and more things identified.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Is there anything we can do from a government perspective to actually formalize how we do consultation? I totally agree with what you're saying in that, okay, we have a framework now, but do we have a framework for consultation to make sure that we're not missing anybody that we should be talking to?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: Yes. There should be that framework for, "Here's what we're going to look at. What do we need to do? Who do we need to talk to, etc.?" It should be a natural thing that happens. If I'm going to talk about security guards, you know what? I'm going to have to talk to some security guards. If I'm going to talk about something with the police, I'm going to have to talk to the police and recognize who the partners are in this and the contributions that they can make to this because they're the—I hesitate to use the word "expert," but they are the ones with the experience in that.

Asking me about fishing laws in Ontario? You're not going to get a lot. Ask me about policing? I'll go on forever as I have done today.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, everyone, for your delegations this afternoon—

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Oh, the government. I almost forgot to go to the government side, here. MPP Sarrazin, allez-y.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you, Chair. I also want to wish you a happy birthday. I don't think I had a chance to do it earlier.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you all for being here. Your feedback is really interesting.

To the National Police Federation: I can understand just how jurisdiction can be complicated. I represent the eastern part of Ontario, from Ottawa to the Quebec border, and I see the OPP boat goes on the Ottawa River and then crosses that imaginary line there to Quebec.

I guess the RCMP do get training but at the same time what they're doing in Ontario and Quebec is different from what they're doing in New Brunswick and Manitoba and, I guess, Saskatchewan, because they're mostly as a provincial police there, but it's really interesting, all of this.

I can surely remember getting pulled over by the RCMP on the 417 in Ottawa in my younger days. I don't think I was going that fast, but anyway. I guess it's always funny when you see, on the 417, an OPP car or an Ottawa police car or the RCMP. You're saying, "Who's going to be

stopping the next guy who's actually going fast on the 417?" It's really interesting.

But at the end of the day, with that bill, with these amendments, are there—well, I'll rephrase my question: Are there operational challenges that these amendments help address, to the RCMP in particular?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: Yes, there's a number of them. The first one I said is the clarity of the authority to act on a provincial act. We have—being from there—the Cornwall Regional Task Force. We have members there who are designated special constables under the OPP, but that means they're serving two bosses. And as a special constable, do they fall under the special constable rules of Ontario? Do they fall under the Ontario police act or the CSPA? What do they fall under? Well, they fall under the RCMP Act, but it creates a lot of confusion. Can the SIU invoke their mandate on an incident involving a member of the RCMP if he's a special constable with the court?

This says members of the RCMP can enforce provincial statutes. Peace officers from Alberta who may come for a G7 or G20 can enforce the same acts they have in Alberta but the Ontario versions. It allows for that interoperability. It allows for less confusion. There's always confusion in those big events, but it reduces that.

And most of our members in Ontario came from one of the contract provinces, so they're already trained in all the provincial acts of Saskatchewan, the provincial acts of Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia—our members. Ontario recruits the most people, and they have the most people wanting to come back home when they get on in their career, 15, 20 years. You know, "My parents are getting old; I'd like to go back to Ontario." So we have a lot of influx from the other divisions, and the recruits get to go out into the field in a car, lights and siren, all the fun stuff. And then they get that base police education, and then they come to Ontario and more focused on national security, organized crime, the transnational stuff etc. So it eliminates a lot of those—it clarifies a lot of issues and creates confusion and allows our people to act without fear of standing there in court saying, "Well, you didn't have the authority to actually do that." Well, now I did.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: That's good to hear.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Additional questions, please? We've got two minutes and 17 seconds left. MPP Gualtieri, please.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Thank you. Good day, panel, and good day to—

Interjection: Did you wish him a happy birthday?

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: I didn't wish you a happy birthday, so happy birthday.

Good day, panel, and good day, Cadillac Fairview, members.

My question is to the board director, Mr. Flannery. With many community-led safety initiatives growing across Ontario, what are the emerging risks Ontario should consider when modernizing the private security framework?

Mr. Patrick Flannery: I'm sorry, could you repeat the tail end of that?

Interjection: That's probably a question meant for Mr. Brown.

Mr. Patrick Flannery: So do I, as the National Police Federation, see any issues with security?

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Well, maybe you would be better—

Mr. Patrick Flannery: Yes. I wouldn't be prepared to speak on that. It doesn't impact me here.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Okay, all right.

Mr. Cyrille Brown: If you don't mind just repeating the question. Sorry about that.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Sure, if we have time. What emerging risks should Ontario consider when modernizing the private security framework?

Mr. Cyrille Brown: If we're talking about risks to life in terms of the guards, then we're talking about training, equipment and certification. Those are the considerations that are at the highest, and are already in place, but now that we're talking about evolved, heightened threats that they're facing, we're speaking towards supporting more training, better equipment that are relevant to the threats that they're facing.

If you're asking about how to improve it, consultation with law enforcement, licensed security and the ministry is going to be the best place to bring the right people together to help make meaningful change.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to our next set of presenters. Thank you all for being here today. We wish you well. Thank you.

CENTRE FOR ISRAEL
AND JEWISH AFFAIRS
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SECURITY AGENCIES

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'd like to call forward, please, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, Virtual Administrative Law Solutions and the Association of Professional Security Agencies. Please take your place at the table directly in front of me. Thank you.

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You each have seven minutes to make your presentation, which will be followed by two rounds of questions, 6.5 minutes per round.

We're going to start with the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. If you could please introduce yourself for Hansard, we'll get under way.

As you heard, seven minutes, and go a bit longer, I'm going to stop you, okay? Thank you.

Mr. Josh Landau: Good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. My name is Josh Landau. I am the senior director of government relations at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, CIJA, the advocacy agent of the Jewish federations across Canada, including here in Ontario. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding Bill 119.

I want to begin by recognizing the important steps Ontario has already taken to strengthen community safety, help vulnerable institutions protect themselves and combat anti-Semitism: the Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant, which was also expanded this past summer to include Jewish camps facing heightened threats; the new specialized hate crime prosecution unit; and mandatory Holocaust education, to name just a few. Those measures matter, but the environment in which they operate has changed.

In March, three synagogues in the greater Toronto area were struck by gunfire in the span of a week. During one of those attacks, two people were inside.

Three months later, Toronto police Constable Marc Pinizzotto was shot and killed while executing a high-risk search warrant as part of an investigation into a broader series of shootings across the GTA. Police have subsequently described a guns-for-hire network connected to dozens of shootings, while also examining attacks targeting synagogues and Jewish schools.

Then, on September 20, on the eve of Yom Kippur, an armed attacker targeted the Sons of Jacob synagogue in Belleville. Approximately two dozen people were inside. Belleville police chief Murray Rodd subsequently described it as a deliberate, hate-motivated attack and said that the attacker had the means, motive and mechanisms to cause a mass casualty event. Constable Jeff Smith was shot multiple times while engaging the attacker. Constable Michael McCurdy arrived less than three minutes later and joined that response.

Make no mistake, due to the heroics of those brave police officers, the attacker never made it inside, and those congregants that went to synagogue to observe the holiest day of the year—well, because police were there and because those officers acted in such a heroic manner, those congregants went home to their families.

In the span of just a few months in Ontario, one police officer has been killed in the course of investigating this broader wave of gun violence, another was left in critical condition protecting a synagogue. Their professional sacrifice should weigh heavily on all of us.

That is the context in which we are considering public safety policy today. CIJA sees three areas of Bill 119 as particularly relevant: provincial policing priorities, police record checks and private security.

First, provincial policing priorities: Schedule 3 would allow the Solicitor General to issue directives establishing priorities that police service boards must reflect in their strategic plans. There is an important balance here. Local police services must remain responsive to the communities they serve. At the same time, some threats do not respect municipal boundaries—hate-motivated crime, violent extremism, radicalization and threats against places of worship are among them.

We have seen incidents cross jurisdictions. We have seen emerging threats that require information-sharing and coordinated responses and we have seen communities reasonably expect a consistent standard of protection regardless of the municipality in which they happen to live.

From CIJA's perspective, appropriate policies could include the protection of vulnerable faith and community institutions, consistent responses to hate-motivated threats and violence, coordination between police services on emerging threats, meaningful engagement with affected communities.

Second, police record checks: Schedule 8 would create a mechanism through which eligible bodies could be designed for purposes connected to vulnerable sector checks under the federal Criminal Records Act. The government has said Ontario police services process more than one million police record checks each year and more than 70% are vulnerable sector checks. For organizations that rely on employees, on volunteers working with children, seniors and other vulnerable people, delays have real operational consequence. CIJA supports efforts to reduce unnecessary delays.

Third, private security: Schedule 10 makes a number of changes to Ontario's framework for private security investigative services. CIJA believes that modernization should also prompt a broader question: Does a single general security guard licensing model adequately reflect the range of environments in which we find ourselves in, in which security professionals now operate?

CIJA therefore proposes that Ontario consider an enhanced second tier: a protective security officer who would be authorized, where the threat assessment and law permit, to carry and use a firearm. It would establish a higher professional standard for security personnel deployed in demonstrably higher-risk environments. We envision enhanced background checks, screening, advanced scenario-based training, de-escalation, threat recognition, emergency response training, clear use-of-force standards, and regular, rigorous recertification. The principle is simple: Greater capability must come with greater training, greater scrutiny and greater accountability.

To be clear, the purpose is not to replace police. Police are, and must remain, our first line of protection. Where an institution requires a dedicated security presence, our preference is police, including paid-duty officers, where they are available. But police resources are finite, so that's where a protective security officer fits in, not instead of police but behind them in a layered model: police first; paid-duty police officers where available; and where resources simply do not permit or are not available, a rigorously trained and professional PSO can provide that additional protective layer.

Belleville showed us exactly why police are crucial. It also showed us why minutes, sometimes seconds, matter. The purpose of professional protective security is to deter threats, identify danger early, protect people and help manage the first critical moments of an emergency.

I will conclude with this: Security policy is often discussed in the abstract—legislation, policies, regulations, strategic plans. For the communities relying on those systems, it is not abstract. It is a parent dropping a child at school. It is a volunteer arriving at a community centre. It is a family walking into synagogue on Yom Kippur.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir. Your time has concluded.

Our next presenter is from Virtual Administrative Law Solutions. I think he's joining us by Zoom, please.

Can you state your name and your role in the company, please? Thank you.

Mr. Elie Labaky: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Elie Labaky. I'm a lawyer and adjudicator, and I'm the principal and co-founder of Virtual Administrative Law Solutions, or VALS.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have seven minutes, sir.

Mr. Elie Labaky: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about Bill 119, specifically schedule 7 and the proposed amendments to the Planning Act. You'll find that at page 27 of your hard copy and page 35 of your PDF document.

I want to make three points. One, compliance is not punishment. The objective is to achieve compliance effectively, efficiently and fairly. An administrative penalty system, or APS, is an alternative to traditional court-based enforcement. Instead of prosecuting certain regulatory offences through the Provincial Offences Act, a municipality can issue an administrative penalty and have disputes determined through an administrative process.

This isn't a new concept. Municipalities across Ontario already use the APS system for parking enforcement and similar systems are being used or expanded for matters such as red-light camera enforcement, property standards, noise and other regulatory offences. These systems have demonstrated that many regulatory matters can be dealt with more quickly and efficiently than through the courts.

Section 7 gives municipalities the ability to build on that experience and extend administrative penalties to certain Planning Act and land use violations. That is important because many zoning violations are continuing violations. What that means is that—take an illegal truck or trailer depot, for example, operating in an area where that use is not permitted. Prosecution through the Provincial Offences Act can involve multiple appearances, adjournments and significant municipal staff resources, and while that process is taking place, the activity can continue. The same can apply to short-term rental operations that are inconsistent with permitted residential uses and continue to impact surrounding neighbourhoods. An administrative penalty provides municipalities with a faster and more practical tool to address that continuing non-compliance, and it can reduce costs, reduce demands on municipal staff, provide remote access and allow members to be determined by an experienced adjudicator without requiring the parties to navigate the court system. An important distinction made in schedule 7 is that the objective is clear. The purpose is to promote compliance. The penalty is not supposed to be punitive. That is the better approach.

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The second point I'd like to bring is, if we are creating an alternative to the courts, independent adjudication should be at the centre of it. The municipality should

investigate and enforce its bylaw, but when a person disputes a penalty, an independent adjudicator should decide the matter. That separation protects everyone. It protects the person receiving the penalty, but it also protects the municipality by ensuring its enforcement decisions are subject to independent review. There are also significant practical benefits: A virtual administrative hearing can be scheduled much faster than a court proceeding; there is no courthouse to attend; municipal staff spend less time waiting in court; residents and businesses have greater access to the process; and an experienced adjudicator can focus specifically on the regulatory issue, hear the evidence and provide a written decision.

Not every regulatory dispute needs a courtroom. If a matter can be resolved faster, at a lower cost, with less use of public resources, while maintaining independence and procedural fairness, that is the better option for municipalities and for the public.

Lastly, number three: A new enforcement power needs a clear administrative justice framework. This is where I believe the province has the opportunity to get schedule 7 right from the beginning. The legislation gives municipalities significant new authority but provides relatively little detail about how these Planning Act administrative penalty systems will operate, and that's something to discuss and to look at when developing the regulations. The regulations and provincial guidance will therefore be extremely important. There needs to be consistency across the province. Municipalities should have flexibility to design systems that work for their communities, but there should be province-wide minimum procedural standards. There should be province-wide municipal standards dealing with things like notice, disclosure, hearing rights, evidence, decision-making, independence and review.

We should also have clear review and appeal provisions before an unpaid penalty can be added to the tax roll. That is particularly important because schedule 7 gives municipalities a significant collection mechanism: An administrative penalty becomes a debt to the municipality and, subject to the requirements of the legislation, can ultimately be added to the tax roll and collected in the same manner as municipal taxes. That's a powerful, powerful enforcement tool. The process leading to that consequence therefore needs to be clear, transparent and fair. There should be goals. The goals should be consistency, fairness, predictability across Ontario.

So if I could leave the committee with three points, it would be these:

First, compliance should be the objective, not punishment. Administrative penalties give municipalities a faster, more practical way to address continuing non-compliance.

Second, if we're creating an alternative to the courts, independent adjudication should be at the centre of it. Municipalities should enforce the rules, independent adjudicators should decide the disputes and the public can trust the process.

Third, a new enforcement power needs a clear administrative justice framework. Province-wide procedural standards, clear review and appeal mechanisms and

appropriate provincial guidance will help ensure that these systems are applied consistently and fairly.

I believe schedule 7 is an important step forward. Ontario already has experience with administrative penalty systems. The opportunity is now to build these systems properly.

Thank you for your time.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for your delegation.

Our next presenter is from the Association of Professional Security Agencies. Sir, your name and position with the company, please.

Mr. Max Warmuth: My name is Max Warmuth, and I serve as the president of the association.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have seven minutes, sir, for your delegation. Please start.

Mr. Max Warmuth: Happy birthday, Chair. Good day to members of the committee.

APSA represents many of Ontario's most established and reputable guarding firms. As a non-profit association, we promote professional standards, ethical practices and meaningful regulatory reform. I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on schedule 10 of Bill 119, in particular proposed amendments to the Private Security and Investigative Services Act, which I'll henceforth refer to as PSISA.

But I'd like to begin with some context. Ontario has more than 130,000 licensed guards and more than 900 licensed guarding agencies. This is not a niche industry. It is one of Ontario's largest public-facing workforces. Every day, security guards are the eyes and the ears of the communities and the facilities that they protect. They deter and detect unlawful activity, identify hazards and often become the first person called upon when something goes wrong. Whether responding to a fire alarm, a medical emergency or a potentially violent situation, the public relies on security guards to protect people and property. Security guards, in turn, rely on their employers to train, equip and supervise them properly. And ultimately, employers rely on a regulatory framework that establishes clear standards and holds everyone accountable.

Unfortunately, that system is no longer keeping pace with the industry it was designed to regulate. The PSISA is more than 20 years old. Ontario's regulators are working hard to oversee a modern security industry using legislation that was written for a different era. The result is a growing gap between the problems that need to be addressed and the tools available to address them. That said, schedule 10 in particular consists largely of administrative improvements and process efficiencies that benefit the PSISB, and APSA supports these.

Our principal concern is the proposed change to the definition of a security guard in subsection 2(4). Today, a licence is required for paid work that "consists primarily of guarding or patrolling" to protect people and property. Bill 119 would remove the word "primarily" and require the work to consist of guarding and patrolling.

We believe the ministry's intent is to prevent licensing avoidance where security is only one part of a person's job

and we certainly endorse that. However, the proposed wording may have the opposite effect. The words "consists ... of" may invite businesses to argue that licensing does not apply unless the job itself is made up entirely of guarding and patrolling.

Replacing "or" with "and" creates another problem: A fixed-post guard may never be required to patrol, and a mobile rover may patrol without ever guarding a fixed post; requiring both activities may unintentionally remove plainly protective work from the act. The wording also fails to resolve long-standing uncertainty around bouncers, access control and condominium concierge roles, while newer forms of remote security work are not addressed at all.

Our recommendation is straightforward: Retain "or" and not "and" and ensure the definition captures other clearly identified protective security functions.

The act also refers to bodyguards, but it does not define what a bodyguard is. This loophole is often exploited by operators who deploy ordinary guards in plain clothes, simply because some aspect of the role may involve protection of a person or people. At the same time, highly specialized close protection practitioners may perform work that is fundamentally different from traditional guarding. The absence of a definition makes it difficult to distinguish between the two and creates uncertainty around licensing, training and regulatory oversight.

But I don't want the committee to leave with the impression that definitions are the only issue. Ontario's private security sector is facing a crisis of integrity. Training and testing controls have long been compromised. Digital licences remain vulnerable to fraud and misuse. Far too many agencies continue to misclassify guards as independent contractors, even where a true employment relationship exists. This denies workers, particularly vulnerable international work students, basic employment protections and creates an unlawful cost advantage.

1520

There's also a new trend in Ontario: the white-labelling of subcontracted guards. This can obscure the true employer, create confusion about who is directing the guard and dilute accountability in a way that makes effective regulatory oversight more difficult.

These practices allow bad actors to underbid reputable agencies, particularly on public contracts. As a result, workers are being harmed, front-line guards may be deployed without adequate preparation or support and public safety is weakened.

Our written submission sets these problems out in detail. It also proposes practical solutions. I respectfully ask the committee members to read it. I have hard copies here. I'm not sure I can upload it before 6 p.m., so I apologize for that.

The ministry is also considering tiered licensing for higher-risk functions, including armed deployments. I want to make it clear that APSA supports licensed tiers. We've been actually advocating for them for over two years. But here's the catch: Higher-risk licence classes should not be built on the current weak foundation. Unless

Ontario first addresses training, agency accountability, worker safety, misclassification and enforcement capability, bad actors will simply exploit any new rules just as they exploit the current ones. Our message is simple: Fix the foundation before adding any more complexity.

So, in closing, three recommendations: Proceed with the useful schedule 10 amendments but correct the definition of “security guard.” The final wording should close licensing loopholes definitively, not create new ones.

Secondly, modernize the act’s definitions to address “bodyguard” and “close-protection services,” as well as other forms of protective security work that may be subject to contested interpretation either now or in the future.

And finally, commit to comprehensive PSISA modernization, including stronger agency licence standards and adequate compliant resources. This is a critical prerequisite to introducing higher-risk or armed licence categories, which we believe are necessary.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir. We appreciate that.

We’re now going to move to our first round of questions, starting with the official opposition, with MPP Stevens, please, when you’re ready.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I’d like to direct my first question to Virtual Administrative Law Solutions.

Thank you for being here today, even though you’re virtual. Your words were very enlightening. And thank you to all the other delegates that are here this afternoon as well.

I’d like to focus specifically on schedule 7 that you had highlighted because this is a significant shift in how certain zoning violations can be enforced. It would allow municipalities to impose administrative monetary penalties rather than have every matter proceed through the Provincial Offences Court.

From your experience in administrative law, what procedural safeguards are most important to ensure that municipalities can enforce these zoning rules efficiently? Will property owners still have a fair opportunity to understand the allegations, challenge the penalty and have an independent review decision? We know our courts are already tied up.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Elie Labaky: That’s a good question. Thank you for asking that.

I’m going to keep it very simple. I don’t think we should reinvent the wheel when we divert these hearings outside of the court process. We have the process right now with the justices of the peace. We have municipal staff. We have court reporters. We have the agents that are appearing in person. That’s fine; that’s great. What we want to do is we want to increase expediency, transparency and efficiency, and we do that by having the matters go through an independent adjudication process. By doing that, you have matters that are being heard by lawyers, experts in the field. The evidence is going to be managed in a certain way across the province, so the regulations will have to ensure that the way the evidence is managed, the way the hearings are managed, that there

is a certain standard across the province. Because the needs of a municipality like Toronto, for example, are not going to be the same as the needs of a smaller, rural municipality. The volume is simply not there. But that doesn’t mean that a basic standard across the board—again, this is something for the regulations, and so far everything looks good.

We also want to take into consideration the needs of an aging population—diversity needs, accessibility needs. These are things that can be expedited through a virtual process. You can also have a hybrid model. There’s nothing to say you can’t have a hybrid model. But through a virtual process, it’s expedient, it’s less costly and the municipalities can recoup their costs at a faster pace. And so, the individual feels heard; it’s easier—

Failure of sound system.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Oh, he’s frozen.

Mr. Elie Labaky: —matter addressed, and ultimately—yes, ma’am?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Mr. Chair, can I ask that the delegate put his presentation in writing and send it to us before we make amendments to this bill?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I think that’s reasonable. Yes, please. Make the request.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you.

Mr. Elie Labaky: That can certainly be done. I’ll have someone send me an email, and I will forward my presentation to you.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: If you could do that by today—I have to have the amendments in by 7 tonight.

Mr. Elie Labaky: Yes, ma’am. If someone can send me an email, I’ll direct that presentation to you right away.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): There’s a deadline, if I’m not mistaken, of 6 o’clock tonight.

Next question, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for being here today, representing Ontario’s professional security agencies, and thank you for your presentation in writing.

I’d like to focus specifically on schedule 10. Security professionals are an important part of our safety network and our communities. They are often working alongside with police and responding to situations before the police are even able to arrive, in a lot of incidents.

The bill makes changes to licensing and training requirements for security guards and also strengthens requirements around identifying licence services online.

From the perspective of your members, if you wouldn’t mind speaking for them, what is the most important change in schedule 10 that you believe would improve professionalism and public safety? And what additional safeguards—you mentioned a few, but I’d like you to highlight them—or changes would you like the committee to consider?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Within one minute and 15 seconds, thank you.

Mr. Max Warmuth: Thank you for the question.

Getting the definition of a security guard right out of the gate is critically important to avoid unintended con-

sequences downstream, and to address some of the historical malfeasance that has gone on with bad actors trying to find ways to get around oversight and regulation.

Most of the changes in schedule 10 are optimization or efficiency outcomes on behalf of the private security and investigative services branch, which is fantastic; we're okay with that. But they don't really address the core issues. That's why we think there should be an immediate review of the PSISA on a more holistic basis, to bring it into a modern state to deal with the very real issues that the industry is facing today.

Outside of that, there is an enforcement and compliance element in schedule 10, which we think is very useful. It allows the investigators to secure production orders, which has been challenging before. When I say there are some bad actors in the industry, I'm not talking about a handful; I'm talking about hundreds. There's a lot of malfeasance going on, so anything—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir.

We're now going to move to the third party for questions. MPP McCrimmon, six minutes.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm going to continue with Mr. Warmuth.

This is awesome. This is exactly what we need. You've laid it out here. Sometimes when people come and give a presentation, it's hard for us—you see us scribbling because we don't want to forget it. Thank you. You just made our jobs a lot easier.

When I read through this, I see someone—you're looking for more clarity. You want the clarity. The definitions are important to you, because that's what is going to end up protecting you or not. I've got to read this through again, because just listening to you, I got the feeling that this specificity is so important at this point now. How do we make sure that we've got it right?

1530

Mr. Max Warmuth: I think there's an opportunity for continued collaboration with different stakeholders. Many minds can help come to the best definition set.

There are other jurisdictions. I know there's Bill 138 to revise Nova Scotia's act. It's not going to go through royal assent, but it had a different way of describing what should be included and what shouldn't. I know in BC, they've got a policy-clarification document that gives more colour to what's included and what's not.

There's two ways of doing it: You be very prescriptive and you say, "Here are the functions that require a guarding licence," or you create a more general definition, but then you have a policy set behind it that lends an interpretive lens. Because it's a lot of nuances; there are a lot of grey areas. You don't want to have a ticket-taker in a movie theatre doing access control requiring a guard license, for example.

There are a number of different ways, and like many other organizations and stakeholders, we're prepared to support and assist with recommendations. But I think one place to start is looking at how other provinces have approached this challenge, because I can see that if we

don't get it right out of the gate, there's going to be some downstream issues for sure.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I appreciate that very much.

So, your number one ask, now, is to amend the "security guard" definition? That's your number one?

Mr. Max Warmuth: Under schedule 10.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Under schedule 10.

Mr. Max Warmuth: Yes.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay. All right. I totally agree with your suggestion. I mean, the devil's always in the details, right? So, we're not going to know exactly until we see the regulations.

When you talk about the complaint review and investigation support with safeguards, tell me, what are the safeguards?

Mr. Max Warmuth: Just making sure that there is enough bandwidth and resources to handle any throughput; that's it.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Really, it's resources so they can actually have the capacity to do the work that needs to get done.

Mr. Max Warmuth: Yes.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay. All right. That's good.

Consultation—I come back to it all the time: consultation, co-operation, collaboration. How would you structure that to make sure that we don't end up missing something?

Mr. Max Warmuth: Well, I will say SOLGEN is doing a great job of late in terms of collaboration.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Good.

Mr. Max Warmuth: There are quarterly discussion tables, multiple stakeholders, a lot of information going back and forth, but I think it's a large entity. And so, it's about how to crystallize that down to the essence. A lot of different views, a lot of different perspectives—you kind of have to separate the vested self-interest out of the mix as well.

But I think stakeholders-focused—like, there's a lot of things that get discussed in these discussion tables and collaborative sessions. I think there needs to be one focused just on this, on the definition sets.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay. I think that's very good advice. Thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Labaky. You talked about the work that you do. Do you do work as an adjudicator?

Mr. Elie Labaky: Yes, ma'am. I'm an adjudicator for the Ontario Police Adjudication and Arbitration Commission, and I'm a hearing officer for certain municipalities.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: So you're talking from in-depth, up-close, up-front experience.

Mr. Elie Labaky: I'd like to think so.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I do agree with you that you need a clear framework in order to get the kind of results that you want. Now, if you were going to design a framework for the work that you're suggesting that we should be doing, can you describe it to us?

Mr. Elie Labaky: Absolutely. Again, very simple— not reinventing the wheel. What the framework would look like is—you have to take into consideration that you’re dealing with different municipalities of different sizes, different needs, different people, different offences and different volumes.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute.

Mr. Elie Labaky: So what we should consider is just a province-wide minimum, procedural standards, dealing with things like notice, disclosure, hearing rights. For example, how long is your hearing? Is it going to be 30 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes? How is evidence going to be submitted? Am I going to have access to this evidence? Is it going to be sent to me via email? Is it going to be sent to me in hard copy? Do I get a hard-copy decision?

Independence means the adjudicator is not going to be hired by the municipality. It’s going to be external. It’s going to be a contractor, someone external to the municipality, who is someone at arm’s length—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much. The time has ended for the third party. You might want to revisit that on the second round.

We’re now with the government. We have MPP Allsopp, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: My first question will be for Mr. Josh Landau from CIJA. Glad to be meeting with you today under much happier circumstances than the last time we met, which was, of course, after the attack on the Sons of Jacob synagogue a few weeks ago on the eve of Yom Kippur, on Kol Nidre.

You referenced in your opening address a number of other attacks that have occurred against the Jewish community—whether it’s shootings at synagogues. You may also be aware that about a week after the attack in Belleville, anti-Semitic flyers were distributed throughout that neighbourhood, a neighbourhood that was still trying to heal and trying to work through the challenges from the week before.

There are a number of key safety and justice issues that are affecting the Jewish community, whether it’s in large cities, small cities and all across Canada. What I wanted to ask you is, can you tell us a bit more about what those challenges are, how we can best address them and which amendments in Bill 119 you feel go furthest in alleviating some of those challenges that the Jewish community is facing right now?

Mr. Josh Landau: Thank you for that question.

Mr. Chair, I should also wish you a happy birthday. I’d be remiss if I didn’t, given others have.

Yes, I’m here definitely under better circumstances, but the Jewish community is facing a severe issue right now across the province. It’s across Canada, across the world. There’s this rise of anti-Semitism.

I’ve noted various steps the government has taken to combat that, but our community, our schools, our synagogues face a heightened threat, a heightened risk. That’s why we’re saying there needs to be this specialized security guard framework—not to replace the police, but

another tool in the proverbial tool kit to ensure that when a Jewish family is going to synagogue, they feel protected.

Police can’t be everywhere all at once all the time. Operational issues would dictate, potentially, a police service officer has to go somewhere else, or that paid duty is not available in a certain area of the province, whereas internal police services have that ability. That’s why it’s so important to give those that are putting their lives on the line to protect us the abilities to protect us in times when there is a serious, serious threat.

Just a few months ago, law enforcement agencies’ ITAC report came out that said that there was a very real risk of a lone-wolf attack against the Jewish community. It happened in Belleville. So I would implore government and members of the opposition to understand this is a very real threat facing the community and continue to do all that you can to protect the Jewish community and all vulnerable communities in this province.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please. MPP Ciriello.

MPP Monica Ciriello: I have a clarification question and then a more detailed question for Mr. Labaky.

I noted you referenced three take-aways for the proposals when it comes to apps and zoning: compliance, independent adjudicators and clear provincial-wide regulations.

I’m looking for clarity on number two. I don’t disagree that they should be independent adjudicators. My understanding is that the process that’s currently in place, although it may vary municipality to municipality, is that screening officers may be city employees but hearing officers are independent adjudicators. I’m looking for clarity on that and if you were simply saying it should follow that same process when we amend the regulations.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question, please.

Mr. Elie Labaky: Thank you for your question. You are correct: Screening officers are employees of the municipalities.

What the municipalities are now doing is that they’re hiring hearing officers as contractors. They’re still being paid by the municipality, so it’s not at arm’s length. There’s an appearance of impartiality. But when you get questioned by members of the public: “Where is the money coming from? Who is paying you?”—yes, you’re contractors, and yes, you are independent, and municipalities are very good about maintaining that independence. However, there’s still the, “Who is your employer, really?” Even from a CRA perspective, from a tax perspective, the elements still appear as though there is an employee-employer relationship. So as much as we want to call it independence, is it really independent? That’s what it boils down to.

1540

So having a party in between—for example, OPAAC has done this. They’ve gone from being a tribunal to being a roster of managed adjudicators, managed hearing officers, and they just manage the roster. The Ontario Police Arbitration and Adjudication Commission, under Tribunals

Ontario, is now just managing a roster of adjudicators, as opposed to having its own adjudicators.

We're already doing it. We're not reinventing the wheel. We just need to perfect it for Ontarians, for municipalities and for the public to feel like they're being treated fairly, that they're being heard and that the process is fair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute left.

MPP Monica Ciriello: I'm going to go to one more question then. Are there aspects of Bill 119 that you believe support or strengthen administrative fairness if we proceeded this way?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): To the question.

Mr. Elie Labaky: With—

MPP Monica Ciriello: Zoning.

Mr. Elie Labaky: Yes, of course. I mean, we're already doing it. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel. Compliance should be the objective; it's not the punishment. We're creating alternatives to the courts, and independent adjudications should be the centre of it. It's a process that the public should trust.

A new enforcement power needs a clear justice framework, and we're working on that. You people are here today to hear me out and hear other experts. It's taking a lot of time to deal with something like this, and it's much appreciated. This is what the consultation process is all about.

Focus on the regulations, really. It's got to be very clear in the regulations that it has to apply to everyone fairly and not be stringent. Please keep discretionary authority to the municipalities on their own process. Discretionary authority is very important because there are often exigent mitigating circumstances that need to be considered for the clients to be treated fairly.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Great. Thank you for that response.

We're back to the opposition for round two, and it's MPP Wong-Tam, please, when you're ready.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you, Chair. I believe I've wished you a happy birthday, but in case I have not, I just wanted to make sure it's on the record that I've said it.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): No, you have, but it's okay.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Then I'm glad I corrected myself. I wouldn't want the day to pass on.

Thank you very much to all the presenters. What a wonderful afternoon of information you provided to us. You've all given us such detailed responses.

I have a few more questions for Mr. Warmuth. Sir, you had started speaking about bad actors in the private security sector, but you were cut off. I just want to give you the opportunity to finish your thoughts. Give us examples of who these bad actors are, what type of actions are in breach of law, or perhaps breach of expected conduct, and how widespread is this?

Mr. Max Warmuth: Thank you very much for the question.

The challenge starts with the fact that there are very few barriers to getting a guarding agency licence in the prov-

ince: Pay \$700, fill out an application, pass a criminal record and judicial matters check and you've got your licence. That's it.

There's a lot of money to be made in the industry based on the size and scale, so you do have people who are attracted who don't have the most altruistic motives. There's no jurisprudence whatsoever put forward on whether someone has a business plan or any expertise in the milieu. You have to have a mailing address, but you don't have to have a brick and mortar or an office or anything whatsoever. How can you possibly run a professional security agency with no infrastructure?

Now, what these folks do is, quite frankly, they exploit mostly international work students. These folks are capped to work 24 hours a week during active academic periods. It's difficult for them to make ends meet in certain urban centres because of that. So they're attracted by operators that offer to pay them cash under the table and not have it tracked against their SIN numbers.

And once they accept that scenario under the auspices that they're independent contractors, which is clearly misclassification because by all definitions, the true employer is the agency that's engaging them, what happens is, they can't complain. The moment they recognize some of the rights that they have, or employment law, they want to know, "Why am I not getting paid overtime? Why don't I get stat pay? Why don't I have holiday pay? Why am I not making minimum wage?" They're basically told, "You want to complain? Well, the revelation that you are breaching your permit will impede your permanent residency status." And so, it's akin to human trafficking. It's organized and it's sophisticated.

Most reputable companies pay a dollar to an employee, and you've probably got about another 16, 17 cents for statutory fringe—CPP, EI, employer health tax etc. If you're offering benefits and other things, that fringe can go as high as 25, 26 cents.

There's zero fringe for these companies, zero operating infrastructure—WhatsApp groups that are used to control, through agents basically selling the services of these folks. We have examples of people bidding on shifts for \$12, \$14 an hour. Because they have an agency licence and because a lot of government bids, in particular, go for the lowest bidder, they'll win bids, and it gives them legitimacy.

And, you know what, I will say this: SOLGEN and the PSISB are trying very hard to root this out. I'm not going to mention names of agencies because there are active investigations. What I can say is that everyone is hobbled by an obsolete act, which was not problematic when it was instituted but its failure to be maintained over time has created a huge challenge.

I've been in the industry since the day I turned 18—44 years. I have never seen it this bad. This is not hyperbole. I'm telling you, it's in an absolutely horrible state. There are bad actors proliferating anywhere. It's not the fringe; it's actually—

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: The core.

Mr. Max Warmuth: —the core, and we all have to do something about it.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you. And thank you for bringing that message of urgency to this committee.

I represent downtown Toronto, where we have heavy presence of security guards at just about every single building. They seem to have, from a pedestrian's observation, just a little bit less training than one would anticipate, especially when there are crisis flashpoints such as someone who is interacting with mental health or, perhaps, open drug use. Oftentimes, they supplant what the police are doing, and they're there first because, literally, they're on site. I've always wondered about how the training unfolds, so what you've just provided, I think, is very illuminary.

What I'm interested in knowing—because we don't have a lot of time at this committee. Believe it or not, but our amendments to Bill 119 have to be submitted to the Clerk by 6 p.m. tonight. You barely had time to upload it by 6 p.m.; we barely have time to submit it to the Clerk, as that's just the way the committee has structured itself.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I'm curious to know—because I've got a minute to sort out, perhaps, a path forward where we can work together constructively to ensure that there's a working group of some sort comprised of relevant stakeholders that will be tasked with modernizing and overhauling the PSISA and then to report back to the committee with recommendations for us to further flush through. Would that be a reasonable path forward?

Mr. Max Warmuth: Absolutely, 100%.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Okay, thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

We'll go to the third party for questions, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm going to start with Mr. Landau. I think the risks and threats that you're talking about—nobody is going to argue here. Nobody sees that, would counter that. But what we need is a solution.

You talked about upgrading, having maybe security guards with more capability to protect. We talked to your colleague here—and you're talking about the same thing. You're suggesting that we should amend the law that allows different tiers of licensing to do different work of different risk. Is that correct?

Mr. Max Warmuth: Yes.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: When I hear about the bad actors, giving bad actors weapons kind of makes me a little uncomfortable, but I could understand why some people would want that. I totally get that. But you think we have to go back and redo the foundation in order to prevent that from happening?

1550

Mr. Max Warmuth: Unfortunately, I do, emphatically. We have one class of guard licence now; we can't manage it. You've got serious issues. I won't even go into the fraud in the training and the testing. You can't take that foundation and use it as a base on which to apply much-needed additional tiers of licensing. The sort of nexus of all this, the common denominator, is the PSISA. Whether it's through collaboration and a focused, cross-functional group looking at what needs to be done, it needs to be done quickly. We've been calling for upgrades to the PSISA for

years. We're in alignment with what we're saying, but we're—I was around when armed services kind of proliferated in the province, and it was kind of like the Wild West.

From a broader public safety standpoint, we've got to be really careful about that. To do it, you have to do it right, and you have to have the right infrastructure, training, guidelines, protocols—a lot of the things that you said that need to be in place. But if we can't do it now with basic guarding, it's going to be difficult to do with higher licence tiers.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Landau, what do we do now?

Mr. Josh Landau: What do we do? We need that hard licensing standard. And like I said, we need the enhanced screening, enhanced training; it needs to be a rigorous process and a rigorously controlled area of the system. There will be no debate there. We would not want guns in the hands of the wrong individuals. So I'd ask that, as the government is looking at this, it makes it as rigorous as possible when you're looking at a second-tier framework. And that is a risk, I think, whenever you're looking at any kind of piece of public policy to ensure that it's done right.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Is there something else we can do—because that would take time; that's the unfortunate part of it—in the interim? What else can we do?

Mr. Josh Landau: Like I said, the secondary tier of security apparatus is a new framework. It's just one tool in that tool kit. Law enforcement needs the resources and support, and I know that they're getting them. They're showing up at our institutions, but there are times where paid duty is just not possible, where, for operational concerns, police are not able to direct their officers to certain institutions at all times. So I think this is, honestly, various sectors, various stakeholders working together to collaborate, to find ways to protect vulnerable institutions, to protect vulnerable communities in our province.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: How much time?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one fifty-one.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: You have a minute to give us an idea, a change that needs to be made or could be made in this particular bill, something that would make an immediate difference. What would you say?

Mr. Josh Landau: I don't have any ideas that I would push to make amendments. I believe my colleagues that have been on the panel have some ideas as to that. So perhaps I'd cede my time to them if they want to respond.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Warmuth?

Mr. Max Warmuth: Again, other than the definition criteria that we've talked about, I think it's the opportunity to quickly have a meeting of the minds and the right stakeholders on modernization of the PSISA. That's really the nexus of it all, and I agree with you: It takes time, but you can't get there—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute.

Mr. Max Warmuth: —without starting, and we need to start now, not later.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Not later; start now.

Mr. Labaky, because of your adjudicator experience, I'm just wondering—you've been listening—if you could suggest one change or one thing that Bill 119 should look at, what would it be?

Mr. Elie Labaky: Well, as a matter of fact, I spoke on the original bill to the change to the Community Safety and Policing Act from the original Police Services Act, so it's nice to be here again now seeing the evolution.

The security guard issue has always been an issue. I think that's something that the province seriously needs to look at. The licensing process—I agree with my friend: There are a lot of holes there—the training, the licensing and the testing. That is something, from a legal perspective—I've worked in the field. I have operated a security company. I've trained in use of force. I was a use-of-force instructor, did all the licensing. And I agree with my friend: There are some gaps there. There's a lot of room to take advantage—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir. That concludes the questions from the third party.

Over to the government: MPP Darouze, please.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you, Chair. I already wished you a happy birthday, so I won't do it again.

I appreciate the presenters this afternoon and the witnesses. Thank you very much for your valuable input into our Bill 119.

Mr. Landau—I'll call you Josh—I have a quick question for you. How might the changes to enable the Solicitor General to set strategic priorities for police services boards support communities across the province? How would CIJA look at that?

Mr. Josh Landau: Thank you for the question. We support that being in the bill. To be clear, local police service boards know the local priorities. But when there's an issue that is facing the province as a whole, a systemic issue, having some directive from the Solicitor General to police service boards to include an item within their strategic plans that all service boards are going to be entrenched and looking at, that's a positive. It's not providing direction on operational decisions on how the police service operates, but on items that the government would see as something that requires service boards to take seriously.

For instance, anti-Semitism, like I have noted, has gone up in exponential amounts. So if a directive comes back from the Solicitor General that all police service boards must incorporate some of that within their strategic plan and look at certain elements to try and combat this, I think that would be certainly something that we'd welcome.

MPP George Darouze: I want to give an opportunity to Mr. Warmuth. I know that you've been touching a lot on some improvement on that bill, but what future modernization opportunity should Ontario consider to explore after that bill?

Mr. Max Warmuth: I think we've talked about some of that already. There is a great benefit and opportunity of having different licence tiers, because obviously an entry-level observe-and-report guard in an empty factory is much different than someone doing advanced order mainten-

ance, trespass act enforcement or quality bylaw enforcement functions. One licence across that spectrum doesn't fit, so we support that.

Just talking plainly, I want to keep going back to the need to completely modernize the act. There are failures of imagination in the act. If you go to the Hansard transcripts and look at the debates from when the act was invoked, you can see some of the concerns that were expressed then manifesting now. I think that's the focus.

In the interim, it might be appropriate for SOLGEN or the private security and investigative services branch to put out some memorandums of understanding to industry, to procurement, to stakeholders on the website advising that, for example, white-labelling of security guard uniforms is not permitted. The ministry was good enough to put out a communication in August 2025 on misclassification, which was very helpful—things of that nature. It takes a long time to go through the process and update legislation; it doesn't take a long time to put out a memorandum of clarity. I think there's some opportunity there to be done quickly to deter bad actors from getting in and, more importantly, to educate procurement entities and customers and the public at large about what's permissible and what's not.

MPP George Darouze: So just for my understanding, are you looking to have it two tier or just modernize the bill?

Mr. Max Warmuth: APSA's original recommendation was actually that there would be a tier that would be available for use by police to be able to do non-court support functions etc. That morphed into a basic licence and a licence for use of force, because all those training standards aren't defined. That also morphed into a discussion about a higher class of protective officer. I think that's still subject to open discussion and refinement, but in general, that probably needs to happen if you're looking ahead four or five years and the challenge is the environment.

1600

Security is a huge component of public safety. We need to be there to be able to support all kinds of initiatives—including the police—and we can't do that under the current construct.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question? MPP Gualtieri, you have a minute and 23 seconds.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: My question is to Josh, director of government relations for the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. Representing the concerns of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs while highlighting the recent hate-motivated events in Ontario—what public safety outcomes would you hope to see by implementing this protection for vulnerable communities and faith-based centres?

Mr. Josh Landau: The number one outcome that we want is our protection—to feel safe when going into a synagogue, when going into our schools. Every tool in the tool box to get us there is helpful. When I grew up and I would go to shul, synagogue, every Friday night and Saturday morning, I didn't have to walk past security guards and I didn't have to walk past police. I want to get back there. Right now, we are living in a high-risk environment.

We are living in a time when the Jewish community is under attack. So elements within this proposed bill could have real consequences.

Again, the secondary-tier framework for an armed security guard—a rigorous and well-controlled system—would provide another tool in the tool kit, more protection for our community and other vulnerable communities across Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for that response. Thank you for the questions.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your delegations today. That concludes your time.

B'NAI BRITH CANADA
ONTARIO RESTAURANT HOTEL
AND MOTEL ASSOCIATION
MR. JOEL DUFF

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'd like to call forward representatives from B'nai Brith Canada, Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, and Mr. Joel Duff to the table in front of me.

Each of the presenters will have seven minutes for your presentation. If you go a little bit longer than seven minutes, I will let you know that your presentation has concluded. There will be two rounds of questions from the members of the committee.

I'll start, first of all, with Mr. Richard Robertson, director of research and advocacy, B'nai Brith Canada.

Mr. Richard Robertson: Mr. Chair, I believe my colleague Ms. Sydney Waxman is online. She will be delivering our presentation.

Ms. Sydney Waxman: Good afternoon.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Welcome to the committee. Please start your presentation.

Ms. Sydney Waxman: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honourable committee members, my name is Sydney Waxman. I'm B'nai Brith Canada's government and stakeholder relations specialist. I'm joined today by my colleague Richard Robertson, director of research and advocacy.

B'nai Brith is Canada's oldest human rights organization and a leading voice for Canada's grassroots Jewish community. Our organization, which was established in 1875, is dedicated to eradicating anti-Semitism, racism and hatred in all its forms, and championing the rights of the marginalized.

Our appearance before this honourable committee comes at a time when Canada is suffering through a national crisis of anti-Semitism. Since 2022, the occurrence of anti-Semitic incidents in Canada has increased by over 140%. In 2025, B'nai Brith Canada recorded 6,800 incidents of anti-Semitism in our annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents, an average of over 18 incidents per day. Members of the Jewish community have been targeted, assaulted and threatened. Our institutions have repeatedly been vandalized, subjected to arson and shot at. Over the recent Jewish High Holy Days, the Sons of Jacob synagogue in

Belleville was attacked, a potential mass casualty event that was only averted by the heroic efforts of an armed police officer who was present at the synagogue.

Incidents of violent anti-Semitism have already increased threefold in 2026 compared to the total in 2025. Please let that resonate for a moment: 2026 has witnessed a 220% increase in violent acts targeting Canada's Jewish community. We've heard from members of the community who are afraid to attend synagogue, to send their children to school and to openly practise their faith.

I want to share with you a message relayed to B'nai Brith by a Jewish mother. Her son, who is autistic, attends a Jewish school in Toronto. Every day she drops her child off at school is a traumatic experience. They walk past armed police and security guards just to access the school. However, the scariest moment for her was the day when there were no police or security present. She spent the rest of the day in a panic, wondering who would protect her child if the school was attacked.

The situation facing Jewish Ontarians is untenable. Our community is under constant threat. We are relying on law enforcement and security to ensure our safety and well-being. The Legislature, through the Protecting Ontario's Streets and Communities Act, has the opportunity to meaningfully enhance the protections available to the Jewish community. Our submission provides recommendations to schedules 3 and 10 of the proposed legislation that will increase the capacity of the province, law enforcement and private security to respond to the expanding threat environment our Jewish community is presently facing.

B'nai Brith Canada supports the addition of section 3.1 to the Community Safety and Policing Act, which will give the minister the power to issue directives to police service boards related to priorities that must be reflected in their strategic plan. This is an important expansion of the minister's powers and must be used to ensure that confronting anti-Semitism, the policing of hate-motivated and hate crime offences and the securing of Jewish infrastructure are operationalized in a streamlined and consistent manner across the province.

Schedule 10 provides amendments to the Private Security and Investigative Services Act. The modernizing and expanding of the PSISA provide an opportunity for the Legislature to confront a difficult reality. Although police forces across the province have worked tirelessly to protect Jewish institutions, practical limitations prevent police officers from being present at all Jewish institutions. However, the threat to these institutions has remained real and constant. As a result, the presence of law enforcement must be augmented by that of private security.

Presently, private security is not equipped to prevent and mitigate an armed attack against communal infrastructure. That is why B'nai Brith is imploring this committee to recommend that Bill 119 be utilized as an opportunity to ensure that private security professionals in Ontario are capable of fulfilling their vital role in protecting the continued safety of the Jewish community. The Jewish community is now facing attacks from armed

assailants. This is no longer hypothetical. The attack in Belleville and the dozens of shootings targeting Jewish businesses, houses of worship and schools have made this our community's lived reality. To properly protect against armed attackers, the security professionals vested with the responsibility of protecting vulnerable institutions must themselves be armed. The amending of the PSISA must be used as an opportunity to facilitate such. It is not hyperbole to suggest that Jewish lives are counting on it.

We already have armed private security in Ontario. What is required is that the circumstances in which private security professionals can carry firearms must be proportionately expanded. O. Reg. 366/07 already enables a licensee to use a firearm in the provision of security guard services if they are authorized to carry the firearm under the federal Firearms Act regulations. Currently, only individuals whose principal activity is the handling, transporting or protecting of cash or other goods of substantial value are authorized to carry firearms under the federal regulations. The provincial government must call on the federal government to create a novel authorization for those who are engaged principally in the protection of vulnerable infrastructure.

The Legislature must also use Bill 119 to legislate a framework for the qualification, training, administration and operationalization of this specific cohort of private security professionals.

1610

B'nai Brith's recommendations are not intended to restrict or undermine the capacity or efforts of law enforcement and police service boards. They're designed to meet an extraordinary moment when Ontarians are facing unprecedented threats to their safety and security. In this moment, the province must demonstrate its leadership by showing that we, as a collective, have the capacity to protect all members of our community. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much for your presentation.

I'll go next to the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association. If you could say your name for the record, please. Thank you.

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Good afternoon, Chair, and members of the committee. My name is Dr. Jasveen Rattan. I'm the director of policy and government relations for the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Please start your presentation. As you heard me earlier, you have seven minutes.

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Thank you, sir.

ORHMA is the largest provincial hospitality association of its kind in Canada. We represent more than 5,000 members that have over 11,000 establishments across Ontario.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about Bill 119. I want to focus on three areas that directly intersect with hospitality: schedule 9 on human trafficking, schedule 10 on private security and schedule 7 on municipal enforcement. I will begin with schedule 9.

ORHMA supports the measures that strengthen protections for victims and survivors of human trafficking,

including the provisions related to coerced debt. Human trafficking is an issue our sector takes very seriously. Hotels can unfortunately be used as locations where trafficking and exploitation occur. That means that hospitality employees may sometimes be in a position to recognize concerning behaviour or potential indicators. For that reason, ORHMA has made prevention and awareness an important part of our work through our Not in Our Hotel initiative, partnerships with police and survivor-informed organizations and our safety and crime prevention symposiums.

Our work has also expanded into tourism. At Destination Ontario's request, ORHMA participated alongside Peel Regional Police and a survivor in delivering human trafficking awareness training that was later incorporated into onboarding for its tourism ambassador program.

Schedule 9 strengthens protections after exploitation has occurred. We support those protections, but we also believe that they should be complemented by prevention and awareness. Hospitality and tourism workers should not be expected to investigate trafficking, but they can be trained to recognize potential indicators, respond safely and know when to involve the appropriate authorities or support organizations.

Our ask is to establish formal hospitality and tourism representation in provincial human trafficking advisory and implementation discussions, and to continue working with our sector on practical prevention and awareness initiatives.

I will now turn to schedule 10. ORHMA previously participated in the ministry's consultation on modernizing Ontario's private security framework. Under the current legislation, a security guard is someone whose paid work consists of guarding or patrolling for the protection of persons or property. Bill 119 removes the word "primarily."

This matters to hospitality because many employees perform some security-related functions as part of their broader roles. They may monitor entrances, check identification, respond to disturbances or protect guests and staff. Many operators do not have dedicated security staff, particularly 24 hours a day. So the practical question is simple: At what point does someone who performs some security-related duties become a security guard under the act? For employers, clarity matters. Anything left undefined can create compliance challenges. We believe the best approach is a prescriptive one, so employers can clearly understand which roles are captured.

Schedule 10 also provides for training approved by the ministry. We support strong public safety standards, but we see an opportunity for a hospitality-specific security training pathway that reflects the realities of our sector, including de-escalation, identification verification, alcohol-related situations, incident response, guest safety and human trafficking awareness. Our ask is for clear, prescriptive guidance on which roles are captured and for the province to work with the sector on a dedicated hospitality security training pathway.

Finally, schedule 7: Schedule 7 gives municipalities another tool to enforce zoning bylaws, and ORHMA supports stronger municipal enforcement. One hospitality-related application is short-term rentals operating contrary to local zoning requirements. In the fight to mitigate human trafficking in Ontario, we believe it is important to look at the full accommodation landscape, including short-term rentals.

STRs are part of Ontario's accommodation system, but their regulation and enforcement can vary significantly between municipalities. That inconsistency can affect traceability, operator identification and access to reliable information when public safety concerns arise.

Ontario has already recognized through the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act that reliable accommodation information can support human trafficking investigations, but where local registration and enforcement systems are inconsistent or absent, the broader information environment can remain fragmented. This is why provincial leadership matters.

A province-wide market requires a consistent provincial framework so that effective regulation does not depend on the resources of each individual municipality. Municipalities should remain important local enforcement partners, particularly on zoning and land use matters. Our ask is for the province to lead a consistent short-term rental framework that complements ASRGA, strengthens municipal enforcement, and supports Ontario's broader human trafficking and public safety objectives.

In closing, ORHMA is asking for three things: formal hospitality and tourism representation in human trafficking discussions; clear, prescriptive guidance and a hospitality-specific security training pathway; and provincial leadership on a consistent short-term rental framework and enforcement approach. Ontario's hospitality industry is ready to be a partner in this work.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

Mr. Joel Duff, please, sir. You've got seven minutes. You can start your presentation. Just move the microphone closer to you so that those people watching and listening can hear you and so our recorder from Hansard can hear you. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Joel Duff: Good afternoon, Chair and honourable members of the committee. My name is Joel Duff, and I am appearing here today as a private citizen, not on behalf of an organization. I will mainly be speaking on two sections of Bill 119, schedule 12 and schedule 6.

Under schedule 12 of Bill 119, there has been proposed changes to the early resolution process. Basically, under the new framework, somebody will no longer have to meet with a prosecutor, a justice and a clerk in order to enter a conviction if they come to a deal. I support this new process. This could free up a lot of judicial time for disputed cases. As well, it is integral to reduce the backlog of ER cases.

There is a capacity question along in this reform. In the court case *His Majesty the King v. Grewal*, 2025, an

Ontario Court of Justice decision, the judge ruled that the period of ER does not contribute to *R. v. Jordan*, a Supreme Court of Canada decision that said that provincial court cases have to be brought to trial within 18 months. And the capacity question with this new ER reform would basically be that this would essentially speed up the process for having ERs.

With an ER, there are only two solutions: (1) would be that the prosecutor and the defendant come to a deal and they enter a conviction, or (2), which would be that they don't reach a resolution and the matter gets taken to trial.

Right now, the Ontario Court of Justice system faces a severe backlog in terms of trials. There are thousands of cases that have been dropped because there are not enough justices or not enough court staff in the courts to hear the amount of trials that need to be held.

My main concern with this new amendment would be that we are speeding up the process for ERs but we are not specifically addressing what will happen if even a significant portion of those cases decide to take it to trial. The current system is already in a backlog, and this will essentially add to the backlog.

There is a proposed solution that I have in order to potentially relieve this backlog, and that is the introduction of expanded court hours. A couple of years ago, the province opened the 10 Armoury St. courthouse in the city of Toronto downtown. The total estimated project cost was \$956 million. Right now, that courthouse is only open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. Essentially, we have a billion-dollar building that isn't open in the evening and isn't open on weekends. We have a great opportunity here to expand court hours in the evening and on weekends so we can hear cases almost seven days a week.

1620

This expanded access could also improve access. A daytime appearance may require a citizen to take unpaid leave from their job or miss time away from work. If we allow more court time to be heard in the evenings or on weekends, it would make the justice system more equitable and accessible to everybody and it would allow people to appear for court without having to sacrifice potential income to feed their family.

A second issue that I have come across in the bill is not necessarily related to the actual section itself, but a general framework idea. In Bill 119, schedule 6, the Pill Presses and Precursors Act, 2026, includes a section where a police officer who has reasonable grounds to believe a person is guilty of an offence may require the person to identify themselves. This provision also includes directions for searches, seizures and penalties.

My main issue with this section is that it fails to address a main deficiency in the general Provincial Offences Act. There are numerous bills that have been introduced, such as the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, as well as this one, the Pill Presses and Precursors Act. In each individual act, there is a different requirement to identify. I believe that the direction to identify for an

offence should be under the general Provincial Offences Act rather than in the individual bills that fall under it.

Currently, there are numerous agencies and officers—police officers, bylaw enforcement officers—who, when they're investigating a bylaw offence, don't actually have the power to demand identity. For an example, currently, under the Provincial Offences Act, section 3(2), "a provincial offences officer who believes that one or more persons have committed an offence may issue, by completing and signing in the form prescribed under section 13,

"(a) a certificate of offence certifying that an offence has been committed; and

"(b) either an offence notice indicating the set fine for the offence or a summons."

As well, under section 22 of the POA, it states, "Where a provincial offences officer believes, on reasonable and probable grounds, that an offence has been committed by a person whom the officer finds at or near the place where the offence was committed, he or she may, before an information is laid, serve the person with a summons in the prescribed"—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, sir. Your time for the delegation is over.

We're now going to move to the official opposition to start two rounds of questions of 6.5 minutes. And we have MPP Stevens for the first question for the opposition.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I guess they saved the best for last, may I say to these presenters. Thank you for coming, and I really want to personally thank Mr. Duff for coming and speaking, not as an organization but what you have seen in the bill. It shows that Ontario is looking into what we're passing at the Legislature here. It's really important to know that individual residents that come to this committee do care about holding the government accountable on the bills that they're passing through, so thank you for that. Not that I don't want to thank the rest of the presenters, but I wanted to get that through.

I do want to say to Dr. Rattan, I have a few questions for you. As the MPP that resides in St. Catharines and represents the residents of St. Catharines, the community is right beside one of the busiest cities for tourism, Niagara Falls—the busiest tourist destination in Ontario and I think in all of Canada. It's one of the 12 wonders of the world. Our hotels and our motels and our restaurants welcome millions of visitors every year, and that also means our hospitality workers can sometimes be in a position to see warning signs, as you said, that others may not recognize in other traditional workplaces.

Schedule 9, as you have said, strengthens Ontario's human trafficking legislation. From the perspective of your members who you represent, what practical tools, training and awareness do hotels, motels and restaurants need in this Bill 119 so that the staff can recognize warning signs in human trafficking, know what to do and intervene safely before someone becomes a victim? I know you highlighted on that. I just want you, if you can, to just represent what you said.

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Thank you, MPP Stevens, for the question. Currently, ORHMA has been hosting safety and

crime prevention symposiums across Ontario. We had one in the Peel region, because it's the largest region we know for human trafficking. We actually were in Niagara as well this year, and we're going to Windsor in November. That's one of the things that we're doing to bring hoteliers and people who are working behind the scenes—whether that's housekeeping, front desk, security—with the local police, because one of the things that we've learned is that the relationship between hotel and police, there's not as much reporting because people are cautious. We're trying to build those relationships so, if they see something in the hotel, they feel comfortable reporting it and they know that there are no repercussions to them if they weren't correct.

On top of that, we offer free training for our members and beyond. It's open for anyone who operates a hotel. It's the Not in Our Hotel initiative. That's what we've been offering. We have been looking into expanding it into restaurants; we're not quite there yet, but we've really been building awareness with our members.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: You also mentioned security. I guess it's through schedule 10, I'm thinking—yes, it is schedule 10. I want to turn there because security is becoming an increasingly important part of the hospitality industry, as you indicated in your preamble. The bill removes the word "primarily" from the definition of the work performed by security guards, which could have implications for how security services operate in hotels and in other hospitality establishments, as you alluded to.

I'm going to go back so that you can speak for your members as well. It's really important that we get this kind of communication going at this level before we put the line-by-line clauses in. From your members' perspective, what guidance do they need from the province to understand exactly what these changes mean for hotel and hospitality operators? And how can we make sure the security staff, hotel employees and police are all working together with clear roles and responsibilities? What kind of teeth would you like to see as an amendment? Do you have any?

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Just more clarity around the word—once you've removed "primarily," this is where some of the uncertainty lies with the legislation, so just clarification around that. One of the things we've been speaking with the government on, especially related to security guards, was that the training that is out there right now for security guards is actually not hospitality-focused in any way. So, when they go for this training, it's not directly relevant. I mean, there obviously are some things, but we've noticed this gap.

In our previous deliberations with the Solicitor General's office, we've provided that outline that we agree that people need to be trained and we understand the ministry is mandating it, but we would like more specificity in terms of hospitality and what that training would look like.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Okay. Thank you. I was just asking for clarity.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Finally, I want to ask about schedule 7 in short-term rentals. We have short-term rentals in our hotels and motels in Niagara Falls. I know that the region makes sure that they have them. For communities like St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, short-term rentals are part of a very, very significant part of our tourism economy. But there also needs to be a clear distinction between legitimate accommodation providers and properties being operated in ways that create safe enforcement amid community concerns.

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Again, what would you and your members like to see from the province and the municipalities to put some teeth into it to ensure that short-term rentals are subject to clear, consistent safety and enforcement standards, and that legitimate hotels and motels—which are really good actors—are not being put at a disadvantage by operators who don't meet the same expectations? And how—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

We're going to the third party. MPP McCrimmon, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Duff, I'm not in the legal profession, so I probably will need a little bit more explanation when you talk about the impact on ERs. Is that evidence rules or—

Mr. Joel Duff: Early resolution rules.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay, so run me through that. How is that going to impact early resolution rules, and will it make it better or worse?

Mr. Joel Duff: My main concern was that it will make the process for early resolution better, but it will make the process for trials worse because it will possibly introduce hundreds to thousands of more cases for trials. And the current trial network is currently backlogged, and we haven't really addressed that fully yet.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Is there anything that we could include in Bill 119 that would actually help that situation?

Mr. Joel Duff: I don't think it would have to be a specific legislation. It would be more of an operational requirement to just open up courts in the evening and on weekends so that more cases can be heard throughout the week, instead of just 8 to 5, Monday to Friday.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: That makes sense. So legislatively, there's nothing we have to do. We just have to fund the courts more?

Mr. Joel Duff: Yes, and have them open for longer.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Do you believe that schedule 6 is a step in the right direction? And what would you change in it in order to make it even better?

Mr. Joel Duff: I would say that schedule 6 is a step in the right direction. In terms of making it better, I wouldn't necessarily change schedule 6. I would change the general Provincial Offences Act. I would put the section in schedule 6 for the direction to identify in the Provincial Offences Act.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Now, Dr. Rattan, I hear what you're saying, and I'm grateful for everything that you and your organization is doing in order to combat

human trafficking. You say that we should have some prescriptive security training for hospitality people. What would that look like?

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: It would consist of alcohol training. Right now, some of the people have Smart Serve training, but that's not underneath the training for the security guard provision, so that would be part of it. We're also looking for more specifically related to event management and—sorry, let me just refer to it, because—

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: It's okay. I know. I was starting to write it down and I couldn't keep up with you.

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: So de-escalation training, identification and verification training, alcohol-related situations, incident response, guest safety and human trafficking awareness.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: All right.

And then, who's going to answer for B'nai Brith?

Mr. Richard Robertson: Myself.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: There's no doubt that the challenges that the community is facing—no one's going to argue with that.

Earlier, we had a representative from APSA who told us that we really needed to redo the entire foundation for guarding because there are too many loopholes and it actually creates more problems than it solves. If we do that, it's going to take us some time. That's not something you can do in a heartbeat.

What else can we be doing—what else is going to make a difference, in the interim, till we get this fixed? How do we improve things?

Mr. Richard Robertson: Armed security could be a component of a revision that would involve the creation of a tiered security structure. In our one-tiered system, we already have armed security; we have what are known as the "armoured car drivers" colloquially. There's no reason why we can't create an additional cohort in this one-tiered system, to address the urgent needs of vulnerable communities who are facing unprecedented threats, and then rebuild that into a tiered revision of the entire system.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: He was certainly worried that there are so many bad actors inside the guarding world, as it is right now, that they could actually do more harm than good.

Mr. Richard Robertson: I find that concern to be interesting because, as I said, we already have armed security guards and I don't hear those same concerns about what are colloquially known as the "armoured car drivers." As well, it's not the province that determines who gets the firearm; it's the federal government. The federal government has background checks. They have training qualifications that are in place. So there are many tiers here of review before an individual would qualify to (a) possess the personal firearm, and then (b) be authorized to carry it in a very narrow scope during their employment.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Maybe there could be a second kind of tier for the organizations or the companies that—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

We're on to the government side now for questions. MPP Sarrazin.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Thank you, Chair. You're getting closer to that birthday cake tonight there, I'm assuming.

Thank you for your presentations.

Jasveen, you talked about the provincial framework for short-term rentals. What would you propose exactly?

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: It would be, specifically, expectations around registration and keeping a registry of that. Right now, this information is dispersed amongst municipalities, but if we're looking at better applying the ASRGA—it works for people who are legitimate, who are actually applying it, but for the rest, they don't fall underneath that. So we're asking the province to do a provincial registration system that keeps track of all of it. We believe that will also help police with investigations, because there would be one central registry versus having to go to individual municipalities to get that information, which also could not be completely accurate. So it depends on the municipality and their ability to enforce it, as well.

Mr. Stéphane Sarrazin: Any other aspects? That's pretty much the change we had proposed.

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: There's a broader short-term rental framework that we could talk about as well. We specifically wanted to identify primary residence—we understand that people use short-term rentals as a way to make some income, and that's great. But it's the commercialization of the sector that we want to alert government about. It's not just mom-and-pop kind of operations; it's the commercialization of the sector—so looking at principal residence requirements, perhaps, for it. But then it would depend on—if you're in cottage country, we know that there are tourism-related short-term rentals.

So the enforcement piece—there are several layers to it. I'm just in the process of actually sending my briefing out to all the ministries. But that's the idea.

Thank you so much for your question.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question. MPP Allsopp, please.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: I've got a question—is it Mr. Robertson from B'nai Brith? I missed the introductions.

Mr. Richard Robertson: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Fantastic. Thank you very much, sir.

My name is Tyler Allsopp. I'm the MPP for Bay of Quinte. Bay of Quinte is comprised of three communities: Prince Edward county, Quinte West and Belleville, Ontario. There's nothing that I like more, as an MPP, than to talk about my communities and to promote my communities and tell people about all the great things that we have going on. But unfortunately, Belleville, Ontario, has played an outsized role in these hearings today. We've heard a lot about the incident, obviously, at Sons of Jacob synagogue, which was a horrific anti-Semitic attack that occurred a little over two weeks ago on the eve of Yom Kippur, on Kol Nidre.

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Coming out of that, there's been a lot of questions about what can be done. Certainly, we've heard from a number

of organizations today, including CIJA and others, about this idea of a two-tiered system: armed security guards at places of worship, particularly among the Jewish community, who we know have been targeted disproportionately by hate crimes, particularly of late. We've had a lot of discussion about that and that's certainly something that we're going to be looking into and bringing forward.

But outside of that, what other things can we be doing, whether it's through this legislation—and maybe there's some amendments in Bill 119 that you feel are particularly impactful in terms of securing members of the Jewish community. But what else can be done, outside of armed security guards? What more can we be doing to make sure that people who are going to a place of worship to peacefully gather together to pray will be protected in those environments?

Mr. Richard Robertson: Something that my colleague touched on in our presentation was what I believe is schedule 3 of the legislation, the creation of ministerial directives. We've seen an inconsistent approach from law enforcement across the province to incidents of anti-Semitism, to mass protests that have devolved into inciting or divisive, hateful conduct. We need these ministerial directives to come into force, and we need those ministerial directives to be used to ensure that police forces across the country are uniform in their approach to combatting hatred, specifically anti-Semitism, in this moment in time. There shouldn't be a difference in how a disruptive, hateful inciting protest is handled in Toronto versus how it's handled in Timmins versus how it's handled in Prince Edward county. These are things that should be uniform. This should be part of the strategic planning of our police forces, and that should come through ministerial directives. That's something that we strongly support.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you very much.

Mr. Richard Robertson: We also need to see, if you'll allow me, the addition of those ministerial directives used to ensure that resources are being properly allocated to the investigating of hate crimes and to resources to manage the situations that are emboldening and inciting hatred in this province.

Mr. Tyler Allsopp: Thank you very much.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute and 14 seconds. You've got time for another question. MPP Ciriello.

MPP Monica Ciriello: I'll fit it in, Chair. And you know what, I haven't said happy birthday on the record, although I said it earlier this morning, so I wanted to make sure it was on the record. Happy birthday, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

MPP Monica Ciriello: With that, Jasveen, I have a question for you. From my understanding of your testimony today, you certainly do support the amendments that are being put forward when it comes to the Private Security and Investigative Services Act and, sort of, the modernization.

The training is something you spoke a little bit about. What do you think will have the most impact under the regulations we have proposed right now?

Maybe I'll ask the second part of that question when I have more time.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You've got 28 seconds to respond.

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Well, I mean—I think the coercion of debt; that's huge. I think that's really important for victims. I really would like to see the province do a short-term rental framework registry. I think that's really important, especially looking at the ASRGA. It just makes sense to figure out how we can figure out who these people are.

I mean, ideally, we would like for schedule 7 to have a little bit more definition in terms of what it means to hospitality—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

We're going back over to the over to the opposition. MPP Wong-Tam.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: My question is to the gentleman from B'nai Brith, Richard. Thank you for your presentation. Thank you to you all for your presentations.

Certainly, the rise of anti-Semitism is a serious issue that grips everyone at the Legislature. I think we stand united in uniformly denouncing all forms of hate, specifically the vile nature of anti-Semitism.

I want to just ask about the support that your organization has to have the Solicitor General, in this case, give political missives to the police service boards because I think there is a system in place right now regarding accountability. Politicians of all stripes throughout the history of this province have strongly agreed that the police should not be directed by elected officials; that it should be specifically coming from the police chiefs, who operate in a manner—as you know, the police chiefs talk to each other. They talk to other chiefs. They share best practices, and they are guided through a local board comprised of both citizens and elected officials—municipal councillors.

So I'm a little curious because you've come out strongly in support of a single politician providing direction to police service boards and to police operations. The political stripes will change—it just happens. We've always wanted these law enforcement units to respond specifically to what is the job of the day, not necessarily to politicians.

Do you see any potential danger in handing over that power to the Solicitor General, regardless of whether it's Minister Kerzner today or perhaps minister ABC tomorrow?

Mr. Richard Robertson: No, I do not, and that's because of the way that schedule 3—the amendment—is structured. This is creating the power for a directive to be given to the police service board to form a component of their strategic planning. That still gives autonomy to the police service board.

I do think that as police service boards across the country are developing their strategic plans, Ontarians deserve uniformity in the priorities that are being undertaken and examined by those police service boards. As you were talking about, we need to be focusing on the issues

today. The issue today is, we have protests that are divisive, that are inciting and they're causing harm to the daily lives of Ontarians.

We have a national crisis of anti-Semitism. We have other vulnerable communities that are being disproportionately impacted by hate. Having a minister direct police service boards to take that into account in their strategic planning is for the benefit of all Ontarians.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: We have seen governments in the past take an anti-immigrant approach. We have seen the proliferation of ICE in the US. We have seen vulnerable communities targeted.

I recognize that the community that you represent is looking for a solution that will centre the anti-hate tools to fight anti-Semitism where it is found. Is there any concern that this power can be abused?

I know that if the local police boards do not follow the ministerial directives that are issued, they could be brought to account to the Inspector General of Policing—so complaints can be made. Is there any potential abuse of power here?

Mr. Richard Robertson: My understanding is that what the police boards need to do is bring those directives into, once again, their strategic planning. That doesn't require any form of a bona fide commitment; it means that it's to be taken into account when they're planning, just like they take into account feedback from other stakeholders.

I certainly believe that there are also appropriate checks and balances in this country. Our police services are subject to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; they're subject to the same laws as every other Canadian. So I don't believe that there is a threat of undue abuse of power any more than there already is, and if there is, I believe that we have the laws in place to hold those who abuse power accountable.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I think the only counterpoint to that is that a ministerial directive would be very broad-reaching. It would be very difficult for any local police board to counter that.

I'm going to just switch over a little bit. Thank you very much for your very thoughtful responses.

Time check, sir?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): One minute and 22 seconds.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Okay. I don't have too much time, but I did want to ask Ms. Rattan a question. I'm curious to know, with respect to the work that your association is doing—you highlighted human trafficking and the fact that your facilities and the facilities of that membership that you represent are being used—how much co-operation is there in terms of a structured, coordinated response from police? Has law enforcement or government been receptive to your concerns? Have they been putting the effort in necessary to combat human trafficking taking place in hotels and motels?

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Our safety and crime prevention symposiums that we've been hosting across the province—the focus of that was to bring the police together

with the local operators, and we found that we've had a lot of support. So Peel Regional Police has been supporting us a lot, and across the province, even members at this table as well have also supported us. MPP Ciriello also was there at one of our events, so we do have government support. Police are very willing to work with us on this because they recognize that we're the front line of where this is happening.

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MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: But that support most likely does not exist with short-term rentals—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Sorry. We have to move over to the third party now. Thank you.

MPP McCrimmon, please.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I want to go back to Mr. Duff again because I want to understand this. Tell me again how the changes with plea deals are going to impact the early resolution cases and how that would slow that process down.

Mr. Joel Duff: Currently, as part of the process in an early resolution meeting, two things can happen: Either the defendant can reach a deal with the prosecutor and a conviction is entered, or if they can't reach a deal they have to go to trial.

Currently, we are in a backlog where our courts don't have enough capacity to hear the amount of trials that need to be heard. So when we make the process to get ERs faster, we also increase the amount of trials that are now going to impact an already overburdened system.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: But wouldn't not having a judicial oversight, like for a plea deal, kind of free up some of that court time?

Mr. Joel Duff: Yes. Not having a justice be present in the ER deals could free that justice to be possibly put in a court to hear more trials. It's kind of just like a fifty-fifty; there is no real way of knowing which way it could swing.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I see. So what you're saying is that it's not necessarily going to be an advantage. It might look like an advantage when it's written here, not having to have a justice oversee a plea deal, but that's actually going to create more work downstream. So you're not really saving all that much. Is that fair?

Mr. Joel Duff: Yes, pretty much.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Okay, good. All right, I'm glad I understood that.

Then one other question for Mr. Robertson. I still want to get to the point. I look at things from a military perspective. So if we're going to prevent this violence, if we're going to deter this violence, not just react to it—the guy in Belleville had the means, right? He had the training. What do we need to do to stop that before it gets to that point?

Mr. Richard Robertson: There's lots that we need to do as a society to get at the root causes of anti-Semitism. This is something that my organization has been advocating for for years now.

I think that a lot of that, though, is beyond the scope of Bill 119 and focuses on holding those who disseminate hatred accountable—societal reforms to hold those who

enable extremism and radicalization to take place online accountable, for instance.

But within a Bill 119 framework, what we can do is we can ensure that there is uniformity in law enforcement's approach to confronting racism and hatred in all of its forms, and we can ensure that, when we can't have law enforcement there to protect us, vulnerable communities are appropriately protected. Appropriate protection in this day and age when you're facing armed assailants is to have armed security.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Let's talk about anti-hate, then.

Mr. Richard Robertson: I'm happy to.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I understand the fear; I get that. I'm not sure I want to go to the same place where they are in the United States where everyone has a weapon. There's got to be some middle ground here. We have to do this right.

So tell me how you would do it if you were going to do this.

Mr. Richard Robertson: Absolutely. B'nai Brith Canada has produced a framework. We've shared that with the Solicitor General's office. We've shared that with the office of federal stakeholders.

Our vision is that you don't expand the access to guns, as you said, in a reactive fashion—very controlled former members of law enforcement work with the police associations, to ensure that those who have the proper training with firearms, who have the proper training around use of force, who have decades of experience working in these situations can augment the existing police resources.

This isn't about arming our society. This is about ensuring that there are enough highly trained and capable individuals to protect our vulnerable institutions. We don't have enough through our police, to no fault of their own, and that needs to be augmented.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): You have one minute and 29 seconds.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: I'm good, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

We're back to the government. MPP Darouze, please.

MPP George Darouze: Thank you, Chair. Through you: I want to go back to Dr. Rattan. I want to give you an opportunity to answer the question that MPP Ciriello asked—you got cut off, so if you want to finish.

Also, I know you talked a little bit about Bill 9 and Bill 10, specifically, but what future modernization opportunities should Ontario consider exploring after Bill 119?

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Well, in all fairness, MPP, I've only reviewed the sections that were related to me, so I can't profess to comment on the whole bill.

I definitely think that there are opportunities for the government to really look at, especially in the fight on human trafficking, very specifically—as you can tell, I'm very passionate about that. There are opportunities to really crack down on it. That's why I really like the municipal enforcement piece. But I really think that there's more that can be done—so that's from our side, where we were asking the province.

The STR framework and the issues with short-term rentals—I'm not sure if this room is aware, but it affects almost eight or nine ministries, so it's not just Solicitor General; it's tourism, it's ministry of consumer and public service delivery. I sit on the board of the Travel Industry Council of Ontario—I'm not sure if I'm allowed to say that here—and short-term rentals are part of that. There's a lot of overlapping.

So we appeal to this committee to really look at that—especially mitigating human trafficking.

MPP George Darouze: I do understand.

You see the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association come to speak on Bill 119, and people wonder why—but you are the first line; you help and you work with municipal partners, you work with the police association, you work with everyone and help and mitigate when you see those things. So we really appreciate the work you do. I know that it's not only one ministry; it's across ministries—so we really appreciate your advocacy on that front. That's why I'm asking those questions about future modernization—because it's really more complicated than only one ministry.

I really appreciate your submission today and your presentation. That's why we want to make sure this committee understands what it is you're looking for—making sure, while we're working and while we're looking at Bill 119, of what else we can do to help you and the association, and also the safety of our community.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question. MPP Gualtieri, please.

MPP Silvia Gualtieri: Continuing from my colleague MPP Allsopp, I'd like to mention that my riding of Mississauga East-Cooksville is also very diverse—and being very diverse is where bigotry and racism breed.

I can see why Mr. Richard Robertson is so passionate about B'nai Brith Canada, as it is a Canadian Jewish service organization and advocacy group that was founded in 1875, way back then, dedicated to combatting anti-Semitism, bigotry and racism, while also providing community and social services to the Jewish community.

My question to you, Mr. Robertson, is, how would the proposed amendments to the Private Security and Investigative Services Act, which include modernizing oversight and licensing requirements for security guards, benefit your community?

Mr. Richard Robertson: At present, there is no specific amendment in schedule 10 that will provide what our community is looking for. However, this committee has the opportunity to encourage further refinement to the

legislation that will address not only the concerns of the Jewish community, but of all vulnerable communities.

1700

I'd like to point out that just this past weekend, we had enhanced protection at Muslim vulnerable infrastructure because of a threat that was made online to several schools. We are living in an increasingly polarized world where the threat of extremism and radicalization is a reality, and it impacts all vulnerable communities. Right now, it's the Jewish community. Tomorrow, it could very well be another community.

We need to ensure that as a society, we have the resources to protect our vulnerable community infrastructure. Right now, police do not have the resources. We don't have enough officers to ensure that there is armed protection at every piece of vulnerable infrastructure. That would be the ideal solution, but understanding the practical limitations of that, it's up to us as a society to develop reasonable enhancements to the protections that are presently available.

By opening up the armament of a select cohort of society as another tool, we are augmenting our existing resources to ensure that as a society, we are capable of protecting all of our vulnerable community institutions. That's what I'm asking this committee to consider recommending.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): New question? I see none.

Thank you very much to our presenters. You can now carry on with the balance of your day. Thank you.

Dr. Jasveen Rattan: Thank you, Mr. Chair—and happy birthday.

Laughter.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, each of you.

As a reminder, the deadline for filing written submissions to Bill 119 is 6 p.m. on October 5, 2026, and the deadline for filing amendments to Bill 119 is October 5, 2026, at 7 p.m.

This committee is now adjourned until tomorrow, October 6, 2026, at 10 a.m. in this committee room—

Interjection.

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

MPP Monica Ciriello: I move that the committee move into closed session for the purpose of organizing committee business.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Agreed? Agreed.

We're now in closed session.

The committee continued in closed session at 1705.

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