

OFFICE OF THE WARDEN

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December 19, 2024

Sent via email: minister.solgen@ontario.ca

The Honourable Michael Kerzner
Ministry of the Solicitor General
25 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Y6

Re: Urgent Need to Address the Court Security and Prisoner Transportation Funding Shortfall

Dear Minister Kerzner,

We are writing to express our concern and to urgently request your intervention addressing the ongoing shortfall in court security and prisoner transportation funding provided to Ontario municipalities. This shortfall places an undue financial burden on local governments, undermines the safety and efficiency of our court operations, and threatens our ability to meet the expectations of the justice system and the communities we serve.

The current funding model for the Court Security and Prisoner Transportation (CSPT) Program, which reimburses municipalities for some of the costs associated with court security, falls significantly short of covering the full expenses incurred. Municipalities are forced to allocate funds from already-stretched budgets, diverting resources from critical services such as infrastructure, social programs, and community safety.

In Huron County, specifically the Town of Goderich, the costs of providing court security and prisoner transportation have consistently exceeded the reimbursements received through the CSPT Program.

The average shortfall in funding borne by the Town of Goderich over the last six years has been \$185,000 annually. With the increase in OPP costs plus enhanced security services in the building being implemented, this funding gap will increase significantly for the Town.

While the Town is required to cover court security costs for the local courthouse as per the Municipal Act, 2001, the Provincial Court and POA Court within the Goderich courthouse serves all of Huron County not just the Town of Goderich.

The Town of Goderich has requested the County of Huron assist in funding their shortfall in provincial funding with respect to court security at the Huron County courthouse. Their funding gaps since 2019 have been as follows:

| Year | Total Court Security Costs | Total Prisoner Transportation Costs | Total NET C/P Costs | Provincial Allocation | Funding Shortfall/ Net on Taxation |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 2019 | \$310,066 | \$7,974 | \$318,040 | \$202,410 | \$115,630 |
| 2020 | \$368,778 | \$4,977 | \$373,755 | \$170,428 | \$203,327 |
| 2021 | \$486,581 | \$4,673 | \$491,254 | \$223,065 | \$268,189 |
| 2022 | \$465,349 | \$4,284 | \$469,633 | \$234,424 | \$235,209 |
| 2023 | \$501,545* | \$4,666 | \$506,211 | \$358,879 | \$147,332 |
| 2024 | \$479,902* | \$4,551 | \$484,453 | \$342,271 | \$142,182 |
| 2025 | \$599,000 | \$5,000 | \$604,000 | ?? | ?? |

Also, under the new Community Safety and Policing Act 2019 (“CSPA”) that came into effect on April 1, 2024, a new Huron Detachment Board has been established that is composed of ten members – representatives from Goderich, South Huron, Central Huron, North Huron, Bluewater, Huron East, 2 provincial appointees, and 2 community representatives. There are no obligations for the County of Huron under the new legislation.

Municipalities are mandated by provincial legislation to provide court security services, yet we are not equipped with adequate financial support to fulfill these responsibilities effectively. The gap in funding not only compromises the safety of courthouse operations but also places undue strain on local taxpayers, who are left to bear the cost of a provincially mandated service.

We urge the Government of Ontario to take immediate action to address this issue by:

1. **Increasing Funding Allocations:** Ensure that municipalities are fully reimbursed for the costs of providing court security and prisoner transportation.
2. **Implementing a Sustainable Funding Model:** Develop a predictable, needs-based funding formula that reflects the actual expenses incurred by municipalities, including adjustments for inflation and changes in demand.
3. **Engaging in Municipal Consultations:** Work collaboratively with municipalities to understand the financial pressures they face and develop equitable, long-term solutions that align with local realities.

Investing in court security is essential to maintaining the integrity and functionality of Ontario's justice system. By providing adequate funding, the Province can ensure that our courts remain safe, accessible, and efficient while alleviating the financial burden on municipalities and local taxpayers. We urge the province to take immediate action to address the financial pressures on municipalities like Goderich and to ensure that all Ontarians benefit from a system that is both effective and fair.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We are confident that with your leadership, the Province of Ontario can address this funding shortfall and support municipalities in fulfilling their court security obligations. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further and work collaboratively toward a solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie Heffer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jamie Heffer
Warden, Huron County