

Solicitor General

Office of the Solicitor General

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By email

January 21, 2022

Dear Chief Administrative Officer/Municipal Clerk:

The Ministry of the Solicitor General is committed to keeping communities across Ontario safe, supported and protected.

In fall 2020, the ministry hired an independent consultant, Goss Gilroy Inc., to conduct a review of court security and prisoner transportation in Ontario, including the design of the Court Security and Prisoner Transportation (CSPT) Transfer Payment (TP) Program. Under the CSPT TP Program, the ministry provides funding to municipalities to assist them in offsetting costs associated with both court security and prisoner transportation.

The review is part of the ministry's ongoing work to leverage technology and improve public safety to build a more responsive and efficient justice system across the province. This includes initiatives such as the Criminal Justice Digital Design (CJDD) and the Criminal Justice Video Strategy (CJVS). CJDD is modernizing the criminal justice sector by digitizing criminal case records and connecting IT systems to ensure data flows seamlessly from police, prosecution, courts and corrections and is readily available to the right people at the right time for decision-making. In addition, CJVS is designed to increase the use of video technology for most types of in-custody court appearances. This reduces the need to transport accused between correctional institutions and courthouses and in turn, improves safety and overall system efficiencies.

Municipalities, police services and other justice sector partners were engaged during the review of court security and prisoner transportation. This review is now complete and in turn, the ministry would like to share the enclosed high-level summary and full report (enclosed). We appreciate the time and effort provided by individuals and organizations during the review process. As a result, valuable feedback on how we can strengthen best practices, as well as explore ways to improve the delivery of court security and prisoner transportation was obtained.

The ministry is taking a phased approach in response to the program review to ensure a pathway for future planning and continuous improvement predicated on good evidence that addresses gaps in the program review. It is important to note that there will be no changes to the overall funding envelope of the CSPT TP Program, subject to the regular fiscal process.

Public safety is a top priority for our government and providing our frontline police and their municipal partners with the tools, resources and financial supports they need to protect our communities is critical to this endeavor.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with you and other municipal and justice sector partners on court security and prisoner transportation and on other shared public safety priorities.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the CSPT program review or if you would like a French version of the full report, please contact Michelina Longo, Director, External Relations Branch at Michelina.Longo@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Jones', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sylvia Jones
Solicitor General

Enclosures (2)

A High-Level Summary of the Court Security and Prisoner Transportation Program Review

Engagement Approach

A range of consultation activities led by Goss Gilroy Inc., detailed below, took place between fall 2020 and spring 2021. Over 200 individuals participated.

	Interviews with a range of court security and prisoner transportation stakeholders were conducted. The interviews had a dual purpose: 1) scope the exercise and understand what stakeholders wanted to see addressed as part of the review, and 2) collect information to respond to the review's questions about how to improve service delivery.	 31 Interviews
	A survey was administered to all municipal police services (71 per cent response rate) and a survey of Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachments (86 per cent response rate) to collect information on the way court security and prisoner transportation is delivered and to obtain input. An online feedback form was also made available to all municipal chief administrative officers and chairs of Ontario police service Boards.	 144 Responses
	Input received from stakeholders through the survey and through online forms was applied to guide a series of focus groups with representatives from a representative cross-section of municipal police services, OPP detachments, First Nation police services, and Police Associations.	 43 Participants

What We Heard: A Snapshot

Funding Model

- Generally, participants are concerned about the fairness and effectiveness of the current funding model for court security and prisoner transportation. Those with courts located in their jurisdictions bear the full net cost of court security, including overtime outlays, as well, the retrospective nature of the grant does not reflect real-time expenditures.
- First Nations police services in Ontario expressed concern that they are not eligible for funding under the CSPT TP and therefore are assuming these expenses.



Prisoner Transportation

- The expanded use of virtual court appearances, accelerated by the pandemic, should be maintained where feasible, but infrastructure limitations and impacts on human resources must be addressed.
- Special Constables are appropriate resources for conducting prisoner transportation and court security, but not all police services leverage these positions.
- The OPP Offender Transportation Unit is generally seen as an effective model; however, there are exclusions that cause some jurisdictions to have to expend additional resources to meet all prisoner transportation needs.
- The interface with correctional institutions is key in terms of achieving efficient prisoner transportation. Scheduling and the coordination of prisoner pick-up and drop-off at some correctional institutions and courts could be improved—technology solutions should be explored.



Court Security

- While courthouse facility improvements have enhanced security in some locations, outstanding facility issues have not all been addressed in other locations.
- Some concerns about contracting for court security functions exist; however, some jurisdictions demonstrated success in contracting courthouse screening activities.
- Unique challenges for Northern Ontario and remote locations cause disruption to front-line policing services when officers are redeployed to court security or prisoner transportation activities due to geography and resource gaps.
- Conflicts were identified between courthouse stakeholders' requests for additional security and constrained police budgets that cannot accommodate increased expenditures.

