

November 19, 2024

Hon. Michael Kerzner
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Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy
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Hon. Paul Calandra
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Hon. Lisa Thompson
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**Re: Addressing the Impact of Rising OPP Costs to Municipalities and the
Need for Transparency**

Dear Ministers,

I am writing on behalf of the [Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus](#) (EOWC),
representing 103 small-urban and rural municipalities across Eastern Ontario,

to express significant concerns regarding the increased costs to municipalities and the lack of transparency around the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) billing statements. We appreciate that the Ontario Government is currently examining the issue. However, as municipalities prepare for their 2025 budgets, we believe that a more open and collaborative approach is needed. Without support, these costs impact residents directly through their property tax bill.

Municipalities are mandated to balance their budgets annually and the current OPP cost increase is not sustainable, especially for smaller municipalities and our taxpayers. At this time, municipalities lack sufficient information on the underlying reasons for the cost increases. This makes it extremely difficult for municipalities to engage in productive, solutions-oriented discussions about how to manage these rising costs together with the Province and the OPP. As it stands, the components contributing to the increased expenses remain unclear, and there is a general lack of details in the communication of these factors outlined in the OPP billing model sent to municipalities.

Across the EOWC region, the 2025 cost increase for the OPP is 21%. This increase represents a very significant portion of a municipality's overall annual budget, and impacts levy increases. These services are becoming an increasingly large proportion of municipal budgets. Without financial support, if these trends continue, it will become exceedingly difficult to manage the OPP service costs, particularly in the 2025 budget and beyond.

Taxpayers are asking municipal elected officials directly about the tax bills. Municipalities need to be able to explain to the public the reasons for these increases, but without clearer communication and advanced notice of these OPP billing changes, it is nearly impossible to do so effectively. Without proper insight into the reasons behind these rate hikes, it is difficult to provide sound, informed responses when questioned fairly by our taxpayers.

Municipalities also need greater clarity around the impact of the OPP cost increases on our budgets. If the significant deficit experienced in 2023 was caused by factors such as police staffing overtime due to staffing shortages, how can municipalities plan for potential deficits in 2024 or beyond? The uncertainty of these projected costs is causing considerable strain as municipalities face challenges in balancing budgets. We want to work together with your government and our community partners to serve and keep our communities safe.

One example of municipal leadership across the EOWC region includes the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, which has proactively hired a mental health nurse to assist in responding to OPP calls. This initiative has proven to be a cost-effective solution for managing service demands while addressing mental health needs. However, these municipal actions can only go so far. Without additional resources from the OPP itself to support policing services, municipalities will continue to face significant challenges in balancing service delivery and managing rising costs.

In conclusion, we request a more transparent and proactive approach to addressing OPP service costs. We need clearer communication on the factors driving these increases, advanced notice of changes to billing, and more support to help municipalities manage OPP costs effectively in partnership with the Ontario Government.

We look forward to your response and to working together to find practical solutions that will ensure our communities can continue to receive the services they need without facing unsustainable financial burdens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Emon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Emon
Chair, 2024
Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus
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CC:

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