



**Canadian Police Association  
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Opening Remarks – Mr. Tom Stamatakis, President, Canadian Police Association  
Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs (Bill C-48)

\*Check against delivery\*

Honourable Senators, thank you for your invitation to appear this morning as you continue your study of Bill C-48. I'm joining you today as the representative of the Canadian Police Association, which is Canada's largest law enforcement advocacy organization, representing almost 60,000 civilian and sworn police professionals serving in communities from coast to coast to coast.

Let me begin by saying our Association has consistently supported this proposed legislation since its introduction. I think it's also important to emphasize that this Bill has the support of every provincial and territorial government, as well as the municipal governments across the country where many of my own members serve. In fact, I think it's fair to say that there are very few issues that you have studied in the course of your work as Senators that have as widespread a consensus as the need for bail reform in Canada.

From my perspective, I think it's also important for us to note that overwhelming calls for bail reform don't necessarily mean that what we need is to embrace a unilateral "tough on crime" approach. Front-line police personnel play a crucial role in protecting the public and maintaining law and order, and our members know first-hand that in the majority of cases, the system works exactly as it should.

That being said, it doesn't benefit anyone to pretend there aren't exceptions, and unfortunately some of those exceptions result in tragic circumstances. Over the past year, the policing community has been particularly hard hit by tragedy. Just this weekend I had the honour of attending the annual Canadian Police and Peace Officers' Memorial ceremony, where we added 11 names of officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities. A number of those officers, including Toronto Police Constable Andrew Hong, and Ontario Provincial Police Constable Greg Pierzchala were murdered by serious, repeat violent offenders with lengthy criminal histories.

It was these horrible tragedies that helped spur a national conversation that led to the introduction of Bill C-48, and it is important that this legislation be considered in that context. While some have claimed that this Bill goes too far in its approach, I would argue the opposite is true, that this legislation represents an important first step towards finding a proper balanced approach that prioritizes prevention and rehabilitation as well as considering the impact that serious, repeat violent offenders can have on communities.

I believe it's also important to consider this legislation in the context of the confidence that Canadians have in their justice system. There are too many high-profile examples for me to list from just the past year alone of offenders that have been released without sufficient safeguards to prevent them from re-

offending. C-48 is a step in the right direction when it comes to addressing these serious shortcomings. Moving towards a 'reverse onus' approach with respect to a very specific type of violent offender will not remove any aspect of judicial discretion, while helping to emphasize that significant consideration must be paid to the impact that release could potentially have.

The proposed legislation also helps emphasize the specific factors that a justice must consider when making an order for interim release, particularly with respect to previous convictions for similar violent offences. I think it's safe to say that most Canadians would be under the impression that this would already be the case, and the fact that the government believes it necessary to highlight these factors is interesting to note, particularly in the context of critics who believe this legislation is overly punitive.

The fact will always remain that bail is a fundamental right, and the presumption of innocence is a cornerstone of our justice system, however as law enforcement professionals, we are hopeful that this Committee, as all Members of the House of Commons did when passing this legislation, can work collaboratively to quickly pass Bill C-48.

Thank you again for the invitation to appear this morning, and I look forward to answering your questions.

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

Tom Stamatakis  
President  
Canadian Police Association