



SENT VIA EMAIL

November 17, 2021

The Honourable Monte McNaughton  
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development  
400 University Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1T7

Dear Minister McNaughton,

I am writing to request your support for legislation to mandate the use of gasoline pumps equipped and activated with 24 hours per day pre-payment technology. In 2018, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) Board of Directors passed the following resolution in response to growing concerns by police leaders of the serious public safety impact of gas thefts:

***“The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police calls upon the Province of Ontario to develop legislation/regulation which mandates the use of gasoline pumps equipped and activated with 24 hours per day pre-payment technology.”***

This position by Ontario’s police leaders is supported by the Ontario Convenience Stores Association (OCSA) and was shared with your predecessor, The Honourable Laurie Scott, and the Solicitor General for Ontario, The Honourable Sylvia Jones.

The OCSA has stated that mandating “pre-pay at the pump” has many benefits for the public and small business members, including (but not limited to) the following:

- it prevents potential injury to retail associates and employees;
- it prevents theft for retail owners who are relying on the small margins they require to earn a livable wage;
- it relieves the burden on law enforcement which has limited capacity to assist in “gas-and-dash” cases;
- it levels the playing field for all convenience stores, including independents and large chains; and
- there is minimal impact on in-store sales for most retailers, as evidenced by examples in Alberta and British Columbia.

From a law enforcement perspective, drive-off or gas-and-dash thefts are 100 percent preventable crimes. Unfortunately, they have and continue to contribute to injuries and even the deaths of service station workers. Such crimes continue to increase in frequency, and police services across Ontario must

allocate police resources to respond to these crimes, impacting their ability to respond to other community priorities.

In 2018, York Regional Police (YRP) presented to our Board of Directors that the service had seen close to a 30 percent increase in the theft of gas over a two-year period, with no indication that the trend would not continue. With close to 2,000 occurrences of theft of gas each year, YRP police officers and investigators spent more than 7,000 hours responding and investigating gasoline drive-offs, incurring costs that were estimated to be over \$600,000 per year. In addition, YRP reported that given the nature of gas-and-dash thefts, an overwhelming majority (approximately 91 percent) of these occurrences did not result in charges.

Following the presentation by YRP, the OACP surveyed Ontario police services on gas-and-dash incidents and confirmed that in many parts of Ontario, these crimes represent a significant public safety threat and a drain on police resources.

A significant number of gas-and-dash thefts are a civil issue rather than one of criminal intent, where the payment was offered but not processed. Stolen vehicles or licence plates make this type of crime difficult to investigate and consume significant amounts of police resources each year. Implementation of mandatory pre-payment of gasoline would strongly support the efforts of police services across the province to ensure efficient police response and enhance community safety.

Since YRP brought this matter to our Board of Directors, the OACP has been advocating with the Government of Ontario for action on our resolution. We have also worked closely with the OCSA on this matter. The OCSA is equally concerned about these crimes, which the association says have tripled in 10 years. The association reported that there were 27,000 gas-and-dash thefts across 2,500 gas stations in 2019 – triple the 2010 estimate of 9,200 such drive-offs.

This year, Peel Regional Police (PRP) and Halton Regional Police Service (HRPS) have also outlined the impact of gas-and-dash crimes in their respective jurisdictions.

Peel Regional Police Chief Nishan Duraiappah told the Peel Region Police Services Board that his officers have “probably gone to 21,000 gas-and-dash drive-offs” during the last five years. Each of these cases requires significant police resources and has a tremendous cost associated with the related investigations.

In the Halton Region, the Halton Regional Police Service continues to experience a steady increase in the frequency of gas drive-off thefts throughout the region, with no signs of this trend slowing. Between 2019 and 2020 HRPS, noted a 31% increase in the number of gas drive-off occurrences reported throughout the region. Approximately 1,000 gas drive-off incidents are reported each year, requiring an average of 3,000 hours to respond to and investigate at a cost of \$165,000. Most of these occurrences (approximately 95%) after the investigation result in no charges being laid. Preventable crimes such as this have not only taken innocent lives, but they continue to burden police services throughout the province consuming valuable police resources that could be redirected to address other community priorities.

While the impact on our police services is serious, it must be kept in mind that gas-and-dash crimes have already resulted in the tragic deaths of workers at service stations. A 66-year-old man died in Woodstock on May 5, 2021, after he was struck by a fleeing vehicle. He was trying to prevent a gas theft.

Pre-payment technology already exists at 97% of all gasoline stations in Ontario. Increasingly, consumers are using Smartphone mobile apps, debit, and credit card tap, which makes it easier and convenient for consumers to pre-pay for gasoline purchases. We believe that COVID-19 restrictions that encouraged social distancing have made consumers more comfortable with the use of pre-paying technology.

Mandatory pre-payment already exists in other provinces. British Columbia and Alberta have eliminated virtually all incidents and calls for service to the police relating to gas-and-dash thefts by enacting supportive legislation. Ontario's police leaders urge the Government of Ontario to do the same.

The OACP and the OCSA have and continue to support Bill 231, *The Protecting Ontarians by Enhancing Gas Station Safety to Prevent Gas and Dash Act*, which MPP Deepak Anand introduced. Bill 231 would mandate the use of gasoline pumps equipped and activated with 24 hours per day pre-payment technology. It would protect workers at gasoline dispensing businesses and consumers and reduce the investigative burden on our police services. The legislation would also provide new training to employees handling the sale of gasoline and give small, rural gas stations (many of which use older model pumps) time to make the switch to pre-pay pumps.

We understand that the Provincial Election scheduled for next June means that the legislative agenda at Queen's Park is very tight. As a result, it may not allow for the passage of Bill 231. However, we believe that the legislation provides a basis for discussion between the OACP, the OCSA, and your Ministry to examine how we can work together to introduce legislation that would help us stop these very preventable crimes. I am, therefore, requesting a meeting with you to discuss how we can move this issue forward in 2022. I have asked the OACP's Director of Government Relations and Communications, Mr. Joe Couto, to contact your office to discuss a meeting in the near future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gary Conn  
Chief of Police, Chatham-Kent Police Service  
President, Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police

- c. The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Solicitor General for Ontario  
Mr. Dave Bryans, CEO, Ontario Convenience Stores Association  
OACP Board of Directors