



Aug 21, 2026

Regional Chair and Members of Regional Council
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge St
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Via email: regional.chair@york.ca

**Re: Call for Independent Review and Civilian Oversight of York Region Transit
Special Constables**

Dear Regional Chair and Members of Regional Council:

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) has significant concerns about the reported incident involving the use of force by York Region Transit Police (YRTP) against a young Black man with a cognitive disability at the Newmarket Bus Terminal on July 30, 2026. In public reports it is alleged that the young man was not given an opportunity to demonstrate proof of payment before three YRTP enforcement and security personnel tackled and handcuffed him.

CCLA recognizes that the circumstances of this incident remain under investigation, however, the allegations raise serious concerns about the exercise of coercive powers by transit special constables and the safeguards in place to protect the rights, safety, and dignity of transit users. The July 30 incident raises an additional concern as the use of force was against a racialized and vulnerable individual.

The circumstances reported in this case raise important questions about whether reasonable and less intrusive measures were considered before physical force was used and whether the individual's disability was appropriately recognized and accommodated. In addition, the fact that the transit user involved is a young Black man demands careful examination of how racial profiling, racial bias or discriminatory assumptions may have contributed to the interaction and its escalation. For these reasons, CCLA supports The Red Coalition's call for an independent external review of this incident.

This incident highlights a broader concern that CCLA has previously raised regarding the expansion of law enforcement powers exercised by transit special constables. Transit special constables exercise significant coercive powers in public spaces without sufficient independent civilian oversight. Given that they may interact with people who are racialized, living with disabilities, experiencing poverty, or otherwise vulnerable, their expanded enforcement powers must be accompanied by meaningful safeguards. CCLA continues to be concerned about expanding the law enforcement functions of transit special constables without ensuring that corresponding accountability, transparency, and oversight are in place.

CCLA therefore calls on the Regional Municipality of York to:

1. Establish an independent external review of the July 30, 2026, incident at the Newmarket Bus Terminal, with a mandate that includes examining the use of force, racial profiling, disability accommodation, de-escalation, and compliance with applicable policies and legal standards;
2. Review YRTP's policies, training and supervision relating to racial profiling, disability accommodation, de-escalation, and use of force;
3. Undertake a broader review of the accountability framework governing YRTP special constables, including whether existing internal mechanisms provide sufficient independence when allegations involve racial profiling, discrimination, or excessive use of force; and
4. Work with the Province to establish meaningful independent civilian oversight of transit special constables, including expanding the existing civilian oversight framework to encompass special constables exercising significant coercive powers in public transit systems.

Public transit is an essential public service, and its enforcement systems must respect the dignity, equality and autonomy of all people who rely on it. Everyone should be able to access public transit without fear of being subjected to racial profiling, discriminatory treatment, or disproportionate use of force. Where serious concerns arise about the exercise of state-authorized coercive power, particularly in circumstances involving racialized and vulnerable individuals, there must be independent investigation, transparency, and meaningful accountability.

We urge York Region to act promptly to establish an independent external review of this incident and to address the broader accountability gap affecting transit special constables. We welcome the opportunity to participate in any review or committee that York Region may establish and would be pleased to consult with the Region on the development of meaningful and effective accountability measures.

Sincerely,



Howard Sapers
Executive Director



Harini Sivalingam
Director of Equality Program

cc: Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario: premier@ontario.ca
Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General of Ontario: minister.solgen@ontario.ca
Laura McDowell, Commissioner of Public Works, Regional Municipality of York: laura.mcdowell@york.ca
Steve Pellegrini, Chair, York Regional Police Services Board: psb@yrp.ca