



PAO Donates to First Responder Mental Health Organizations on Behalf of Police Members

August 25, 2020 – Toronto, ON – The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is pleased to announce it will be making monetary donations of \$5,000 each to two organizations dedicated to supporting the mental health of first responders in Ontario.

Over the next few days, PAO President Bruce Chapman will be visiting Boots on the Ground in Halton Region and Wounded Warriors Canada in Durham Region for physically-distanced cheque presentations to express the Association's support for these two important services.

Boots on the Ground is a group of dedicated retired and serving first responders who work together to provide anonymous, caring and compassionate peer support that is available 24/7. All team members have peer support and suicide prevention training.

Wounded Warriors Canada's PTSD Service Dog Program supports the pairing of approximately 100 service dogs annually. Early clinical evidence has indicated that properly trained PTSD service dogs have life changing and life saving impacts on individuals they are matched with.

The organizations were originally selected by the PAO Board of Directors to receive proceeds raised from the PAO's charity golf tournament that was to be held at the end of June 2020 in conjunction with Ontario's 2nd annual PTSD Awareness Day. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tournament was postponed to 2021, but the Board still wanted to make these financial contributions to ensure the invaluable support provided to our police personnel members and all first responders would be maintained.

"Many research studies have shown that first responders have a much greater risk of suffering from mental health issues, including operational stress injuries such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as a result of their exposure to traumatic incidents," said President Chapman.

"Funding for support services such as Boots on the Ground and Wounded Warriors Canada is crucial to ensuring Ontario's sworn and civilian police personnel, along with all first responders across the province, are able to access to these programs if and when they need them."

The PAO's inaugural golf tournament has been re-scheduled for late June 2021 to correspond with Ontario's 3rd annual PTSD Awareness Day. Planning will begin as we move into the final quarter of 2020, and Boots on the Ground and Wounded Warriors Canada will be carried over as fundraising recipients.

Questions about this announcement and the 2021 PAO Charity Golf Tournament can be directed to communications@pao.ca.