



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Provincial Budget Dedicates \$45 Million to Mental Health for First Responders

Focus is on mental health promotion and resiliency, as well as early intervention and treatment

April 28, 2022 – The Police Association of Ontario is very excited to learn of Ontario’s planned \$45 million investment in supporting the mental health of first responders, announced today in the provincial budget. The PAO has advocated for the need to ensure that police personnel and other first responders have access to quality, specialized care in relation to mental health struggles that too often stem from on-the-job traumas.

“Member mental health and wellness has been a top priority of the PAO and of mine for a number of years. When we brought this initiative to Solicitor General Jones, she made it clear that the wellness of our membership was a priority for her and for her government,” said PAO President Mark Baxter. “I’m really encouraged to see that this government recognizes the need to provide 24/7 wellness support for police personnel and their families.”

As part of the provincial budget, the Solicitor General will administer a program to distribute \$45 million over three years to support organizations and programs that provide public safety personnel (PSP) with access to specialized mental health services. The focus is on mental health promotion and resiliency, as well as early intervention and treatment. Funding will support police, corrections, emergency health services and fire. The funding will also include programs to support employee and family assistance programs.

The Solicitor General is also going to invest \$0.5M to create an online province-wide inventory of regionally available mental health programs restricted to wellness coordinators across fire, police, corrections and emergency health services. These programs will focus on mental health promotion, resiliency, early intervention and treatment for PSP including municipal police and fire and emergency health services, as well as provincial correctional employees, the Ontario Provincial Police and their families.

“The PAO is looking forward to working with the Solicitor General to get these programs implemented across the province for our members and for all first responders across Ontario,” said Baxter. “Ontario’s police personnel need 24/7 crisis support and the resources to help themselves in order to effectively help others. They need to feel safe and they need dedicated care. This program needs to make a real impact in reducing the stigma attached to mental health in policing and hopefully also help to reduce the rise in PTSD cases that we’re seeing in first responders.”



We know that one in five first responders develop PTSD in their lifetime. We also know that between three and five police suicides happen every year and 30% have had suicidal thoughts. Having dedicated resources for police personnel is vital for helping to reduce these numbers.

This \$45 million in mental health funding for first responders comes just a few months after the announcement that the province is building a dedicated mental health facility for first responders, with the provincial and federal governments each providing \$1 million for the capital planning stage of the facility. The Runnymede First Responders PTSI Rehabilitation Centre is due to be completed in late 2024.

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About the Police Association of Ontario (PAO):

Founded in 1933, the Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is the official provincial representative body for over 28,000 sworn and civilian police personnel from 45 police associations across Ontario. A unifying voice for advocacy in policing, the PAO provides its member associations with representation, resource, and support.

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