



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### The Police Association of Ontario's Inaugural Charity Golf Tournament for PTSD Awareness Raises \$20,000

*Funds raised are being split between three charities dedicated to providing mental health support for Ontario's first responders*

June 27, 2022 – The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) held its inaugural charity golf tournament at Lionhead Golf Club in Brampton today, raising \$20,000 for the three charities it chose to support, all of which provide mental health support for Ontario's first responders.

Badge of Life Canada, Boots On The Ground and Wounded Warriors Canada – PTSD Service Dog Program will all receive an equal amount of \$6,666.67, thanks to the support of 124 golfers from member associations across the province, as well as numerous sponsors, including platinum sponsor LIUNA Local 183 and gold sponsor Milton Ford.

The date of the tournament, June 27, was chosen to coincide with PTSD Awareness Day. 2019 was the first year that Ontario marked the designation, making it an historic moment for mental health awareness. First responders are at heightened risk of developing operational stress injuries, including PTSD, with one in five first responders developing PTSD in their lifetime. PTSD Awareness Day helps to raise awareness for the disorder and helps those who suffer move past stigma, isolation and helplessness, and towards resources, understanding and, ultimately, the road to recovery.

“Operational Stress Injuries affect so many first responders, and the PAO has been dedicated to providing our members with access to better resources for their mental health,” said Mark Baxter, President of the PAO. “We specifically wanted to donate the proceeds of our inaugural golf tournament to Badge of Life Canada, Boots On The Ground and Wounded Warriors Canada (PTSD Service Dog Program) because those non-profit organizations have proven to be such vital supports to first responders. We couldn't be more thrilled to be able to donate \$6666 to each organization and hope it helps them to deliver their incredible programming.”

**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. President Dave McLennan, who was on hand for the tournament, was honoured to accept the donation.



“I want to thank Mark Baxter and the Police Association of Ontario for this generous support. Boots On The Ground is honoured to be a recipient of support from this golf tournament. The PAO has been supporting us in many ways since our inception,” said McLennan. “This type of financial support is critical to our organization and it allows us to provide 24/7 per support to all first responders across Ontario. It also helps to support our PTSD service dog program, our peer-to-peer group debrief program and our psychologist funding program. Boots On The Ground is completely run and staffed by volunteer first responders and all funds donated to us go directly into our programming to help first responders.”

**Badge of Life** empowers Canadian public safety personnel and their families who are dealing with operational stress injuries including post-traumatic stress and suicidal ideation, to achieve healthy living and post-traumatic growth. Executive Director Laura Kloosterman was also at the tournament and was delighted to accept the donation.

“This generous donation will help Badge of Life Canada continue to empower Canadian public safety personnel and their families through education and peer support,” said Kloosterman. “No one is alone in their journey. HOPE – GROWTH – RECOVERY. Thank you for this donation and for moving forward in the transformation of the culture by ending the stigma.”

**Wounded Warriors Canada – 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. Steve Topham, National Partnerships Director, attended the event and is grateful for the PAO’s support.

“Wounded Warriors Canada is grateful to be a charitable partner of the PAO and this year’s event,” said Topham. “WWC has created an innovative approach to mental healthcare that uses clinical best practices and evidence informed care to create an environment of compassion, resiliency and hope for our veteran and first responder communities. These programs would simply not be possible without the support of organizations like the PAO, at a time when our services are needed more than ever before.”

The PAO plans on making this charity golf tournament an annual event to support PTSD awareness.

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**About the Police Association of Ontario (PAO):**



Founded in 1933, the 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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