



When Voting in the Upcoming Municipal Election, Consider Local Candidates' Positions on Keeping Your Community Safe

Police Association of Ontario President Bruce Chapman

As President of the Police Association of Ontario (PAO), I would like to encourage all Ontarians to become more informed on the significant public safety issues affecting communities throughout the province before you vote on Monday, October 22.

It can be argued that municipal elections are the most important vote you will make. There is no level of government that is more directly responsible for serving your community than these locally elected officials. They can affect what your city or town looks like in 10-20 years, and also what services it will offer to residents. Despite that, in the last municipal election in 2014, voter turnout across Ontario averaged only 43% – significantly lower than the turnout for the most recent provincial (2018: 58%) and federal (2015: 68%) elections.

If you are concerned about your community's safety, better transit, fair taxes, quality schools, affordable childcare, clean green spaces, efficient garbage/recycling collection, rec centres and road maintenance, it is important to educate yourself on the positions of your local candidates.

Front-line sworn and civilian police personnel across Ontario strongly believe in local initiatives aimed at bettering communities across the province and supporting vulnerable populations who may need greater levels of assistance. Like you, our front-line police services personnel are moms, dads, friends and neighbours that are also concerned about the public safety issues facing the communities they live and work in. There are a few key community safety priorities that I ask voters to keep in mind when electing your next local government:

- With recreational cannabis being legalized throughout Canada on October 17, 2018, Ontario's police personnel need municipal governments to provide appropriate training, tools and resources to ensure community safety continues to be protected from those who may be impaired.
- Police in communities across Ontario deal with some of the most vulnerable populations everyday, and experience first-hand where system gaps exist for individuals suffering from mental health issues. Municipalities need to develop strategies for supporting these individuals and properly fund accessible and effective local mental health and addiction resources.
- First responders – the women and men who work to protect your community every day – are significantly more likely to develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other Occupational Stress Issues (OSIs) than the rest of society. In the wake of the recent tragic, preventable deaths of officers from services across the province, Ontario's sworn and civilian police personnel are calling on municipalities to deliver more effective and accessible mental health support and resources specifically tailored for first responders.

I strongly encourage you to make your voice heard, and turn opinion into action. If a candidate comes to your door, ask them questions about how they plan to support local policing to keep your community safe. Post on social media and tag your local candidates to start online conversations about the issues that matter most to you. And – on Monday, October 22 – make sure you are a part of the electorate by casting your vote.