



FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

PAO Applauds Ontario Government for Recognizing First-Ever PTSD Awareness Day

TORONTO, June 27, 2019 / CNW / -- Today marks an historic step forward in building mental health awareness in Ontario with the proclamation of the first-ever Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day. The Police Association of Ontario, which represents over 18,000 sworn and civilian police personnel across the province, applauds the Ontario Government's commitment to recognize those who suffer from this often-debilitating disorder.

In mid-2018, newly-elected Brantford-Brant MPP Will Bouma brought forward a private member's bill in the Ontario Legislature that focused on recognizing an annual awareness day for PTSD. His private member's bill was included in Bill 100, *Protecting What Matters Most Act (Budget Measures), 2019* – as Section 52 – and consultations occurred with many stakeholders. PAO President Bruce Chapman and Board Chair Mark Baxter were honoured to appear in front of the Standing Committee to describe the impact such a day would have for the PAO's membership. Bill 100, including Section 52, received royal assent last month.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can manifest after experiencing a traumatic event. It has the potential to affect victims or witnesses of stressful events such as crimes, major accidents, or natural disasters. A provincially-recognized PTSD Awareness Day helps to decrease stigma, increase mindfulness, and encourage the creation of resources and supports for those who are struggling with this very real issue. Unfortunately, though unsurprisingly given their duty to uphold public safety, our police personnel members are one of the highest at-risk groups to suffer from Operational Stress Injuries (OSIs), which include PTSD.

The statistics sadly speak for themselves. One in five first responders will develop PTSD in their lifetime, and 28% of first responders will have suicidal thoughts in their lifetime. Too often these thoughts are suppressed and ignored with fatal consequences. Every week, at least one of the 73,000 first responders in this country takes their own life. That number is simply unacceptable. We've learned that suffering from PTSD is not a sign of weakness – it's an injury, sustained like any other in the line of duty, except it's not always visible and doesn't heal so easily.

By drawing attention to the prevalence of OSIs among police and other first responders through initiatives such as PTSD Awareness Day, we hope our members are more willing to seek out assistance, employers are more willing to take these matters seriously, and all levels of government are more willing to provide the funding and resources needed to protect those who protect others.

The PAO encourages anyone who feels like they may require support or access to local resources – no matter how big or small, no matter whether they are a first responder or member of the public – to reach out to the Ontario Chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association at <http://ontario.cmha.ca/> or 1.866.531.2600.



-30-

About the Police Association of Ontario

The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is the official provincial representative body for 18,000 sworn and civilian police personnel from 47 local police associations across Ontario. A unifying voice for advocacy in policing, the PAO provides its member associations with representation, resource and support.

Contacts:

Sarah Coulter, Communications Manager
Sarah.Coulter@pao.ca | 416.569.7577

Bruce Chapman, PAO President
Bruce.Chapman@pao.ca | 905.599.4813

Website: PAO.ca

Twitter: @PoliceAssocON

Facebook: @PoliceAssociationOfOntario