

Media Release

Police Leaders Call for “De-Emphasizing” the Role of Police in Mental Health and Addiction Issues

Police Chiefs support health care professionals in the community, a robust mental health and addiction system, and supportive role for law enforcement

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(Huntsville, ON) – Ontario’s police leaders have passed a resolution which calls for “de-emphasizing” the role of police in mental health/addiction cases, support for health care professionals in the community, and a robust mental health and addiction system as the way to address mental health issues.

The resolution also calls on the Government of Ontario to continue the meaningful progress already achieved on mental health and addictions by moving forward on a 10-Year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

“The best response to mental health and addiction cases is not one that emphasizes the role of law enforcement, but one that sees our police officers support the health care professionals in addressing mental health and addiction issues before they become law enforcement issues,” said Chief Matt Torigian, President of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP).


Chief Torigian noted that police leaders are united in their desire to see individuals with mental health and addictive receive adequate care through social services and supports that would lessen the risk of such individuals coming into contact with the justice system.

While police will always respond to community safety incidents involving mental health and/or addiction issues, Chief Torigian emphasized that addressing an individual’s mental health or addiction issues through the health care system and social services is always preferable to engagement with the justice system.

The resolution was passed by delegates to the OACP’s Annual General Meeting on June 29 in Huntsville. It is available on the OACP’s website at www.oacp.ca.


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