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Presentation to the
House of Commons' Standing Committee on Public Safety
and National Security

**Operational Stress Injuries and Post Traumatic
Stress Disorder in Public Safety Officers and First
Responders**

Remarks By:

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Human Resources & Learning Committee

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On behalf of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) and Peel Regional Police I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to speak here today and contribute to this important discussion. My name is Jennifer Evans and I am in my fourth year as Chief of the Peel Regional Police in Ontario.

By way of background Peel Regional Police is the third largest municipal police organization in Canada, and provides policing services to the 1.3 million residents of the cities of Brampton and Mississauga. Currently our authorized complement is 2016 uniform personnel and 844 civilian staff within our organization.

We also police Canada's busiest airport, Pearson International Airport, which is situated in the City of Mississauga and has an estimated 41 million passengers pass through the airport annually.

Peel Regional Police recognize and value our personnel as being vital to our success. In ensuring the safety those who live, work and play in our community we also know it is important to take care of the people who are taking care of our community.

In 2008 we established an Organizational Wellness Bureau. We know that creating a healthy workplace is a commitment to a journey and not just a destination. The mandate of the Bureau is aligned with

one of the goals of our Strategic Plan namely: a Member Focused Workplace. This simply means we want to ensure the health and well-being of all our employees.

In our Organizational Wellness Bureau we currently have a Staff Sergeant in charge of the unit who oversees a Health Nurse, Fitness Coordinator, Wellness Coordinator, Chaplain Coordinator (we have 5 chaplains representing the various faith groups) an Early Intervention Strategy Coordinator as well as an Addiction Coordinator. Some of the enhanced health and wellness resources we provide are:

- A Chaplaincy Program to include on-site hours for spiritual counseling;
- On-site access to massage therapy, chiropractic care, physiotherapy, dental hygiene and dietitian services;
- Access to legal, financial, and family support services as well as health coaching services with naturopathic and nutritional support;
- Safeguarding Program – mandated semi-annual psychological assessments for employees currently assigned to the Internet Child Exploitation Unit and we are currently expanding the program to include employees who work in Technological Crimes Unit, Special Victims Unit, Major Collision Bureau, Organization Wellness, Emergency Support, Homicide Bureau, Communications Bureau, Forensic Identification, Courts, Major Drugs and Vice
- Peer Support – 84 members
- Target Life – an initiative based on progression through five phases that promote practices that are part of a healthy lifestyle.

- Educational Lunch and Learns – “Boosting your positive outlook,” “Coping with Teenagers,” “Dealing with Seasonal Stress,” – all designed to offer coping strategies to our employees to reduce stress
- Wellness Family Nights – educating families on what to expect and how to prepare and support their love ones in this stress-filled life
- Early Intervention Systems – A system that tracks prospective risk indicators and flags opportunities for early intervention
 - Public complaints
 - Use of force incidents
 - Internal affairs investigations
 - Sick time
 - Exposure to tragic calls i.e., fatal MVCs, child deaths, suicides
- Critical Incident Response Teams – 12 members
 - Exposure to serious and/or tragic circumstances
- Directory of Health Professionals
- Return to work programs

In 2015 we launched our Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) training which is mandated training to all employees at all levels relating to identifying and understanding mental health issues in co-workers and themselves. It is also a stigma reducing program designed to teach coping mechanisms, acceptance and support of co-workers as well as strengthening personal resilience. To date we have trained 2657 employees including 23 senior officers. This is a program that was initially created for the Canadian Military and after years of trying to use the program to benefit municipal police officers we were finally

permitted to use similar training. One request that I have is that this committee identify ways to allow training material to pass from the federal government (i.e. the military) to provincial and municipal agencies that can benefit. I understand that police agencies were only allowed to begin using the R2MR because the Canadian Mental Health Association became the conduit in which to transfer this knowledge. I can tell you that we are hearing very positive feedback as a result of the training.

We are currently working with Dr. Judith Anderson and her team from the University of Toronto (I believe she testified before you). The program is called the International Performance Resilience and Efficiency Program or “iPREP. Her research project focuses on studying the impact of learned resiliency techniques on officer performance in the field.

We have also launched a campaign entitled “reducing the stigma.” This is to increase mental health awareness and encourage self-reporting.

The topic of Occupational Stress Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is something that we have been focusing on for some time in Peel and we are so encouraged that it has now become a topic of national attention and importance. This is a significant issue that

requires that we create and communicate a clear strategy. It also requires a commitment because I do not believe that one program alone will solve this issue. Peel Regional Police continue to look for opportunities to improve mental health in the workplace through collaboration and research.

I would like thank each of you for allowing me this time to speak on this important issue.

I look forward to responding to your questions.

Thank-you