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GOVT CUTS TO GANG VIOLENCE PROGRAM FUNDING COMPROMISES PUBLIC SAFETY

Mississauga, ON - The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is very concerned about the Wynne government's commitment to maintaining public safety after they announced they are cutting the Provincial Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (PAVIS) for 15 Ontario communities starting next year. PAO says the cut will mean either the municipality will have to absorb extra costs or there will be police officer reductions.

"The government is trying to mislead the public into thinking they are increasing program funding for crime prevention programs that help stop gang violence," says PAO President Bruce Chapman. "The reality is they are cutting almost \$5 million from public safety programs through amalgamation in the following year - including police officers who have been effectively removing illegal drugs and weapons from the streets in several areas throughout the province."

PAO says Durham, London, Windsor and Ottawa are some of the cities and regions that rely on this program to stop and seize illegal drugs and weapons.

"With the gangs, come the drugs and violence," says Chapman. "In the government's own press release on January 27, 2011, *Police and Province Working Together To Rid Ontario Streets Of Guns and Gangs*, they stated the program resulted in a 27% decrease in muggings in Hamilton and seizure of over \$5 million dollars illegal drugs in Waterloo and Sudbury. If a program makes our neighbourhoods and communities safe from gang and drug crimes, why would they cut it?"

PAO says the centralization of several programs means there will be less officers employed to work in those communities that are prone to increased gang and drug trafficking activity.

“In the government press release today, the government recognizes local police services have been instrumental in keeping crime rates low,” says Chapman. “Cutting police programs in vulnerable neighbourhoods will inevitably mean those lower crimes will start to increase.”

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Police Association of Ontario is the official voice and representative body for Ontario’s front-line police personnel.