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REGULATIONS WILL HAMPER POLICE ABILITY TO PROTECT ONTARIANS: PAO PRESIDENT

Mississauga, ON - The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) says the government's decision to significantly alter the investigative practice of street checks will inevitably lead to less effective policing and higher crime rates.

"If a neighbourhood has experienced a number of break-ins or sexual assaults, Ontarians fully expect patrolling police to interact with individuals that arouse their suspicions," says PAO President Bruce Chapman. "Under these new regulations, a patrolling officer attempting to engage a suspicious member of the public is stripped of his ability to effectively collect information. Because the officer will immediately have to inform the individual of their right to walk away, the officer will learn nothing about the individual and have no record of their interaction."

The PAO has always been clear that it welcomes the standardization of practices surrounding street checks in Ontario and is pleased that Government has signalled its intention to officially outlaw street checks based not on proper policing matters but on race or other arbitrary factors. Arbitrary detentions are contrary to the *Charter* and we agree with the Government that they have no place in Ontario.

"Everyone should be aware of their rights, but the Government has acknowledged that there are situations where it would not be prudent or safe to inform people of their rights. By attempting to draw a line in this area, the Government risks scenarios where a police officer may actually tip off a suspect of an investigation by *not* providing the mandated caution and receipt," says Chapman. "This turns a benign situation potentially volatile and unnecessarily dangerous."

For these reasons, Chapman is "confident that if these new rules go into effect it will significantly hamper the ability of the police to protect law-abiding citizens from potentially dangerous individuals within their communities."

Chapman says the Steven Yeardley case in Peterborough is a great example of how the loss of investigative tools may have dangerous consequences. Yeardley was released after serving a sentence for a brutal sexual assault, and had strict limitations on his movement at night. A police officer noticed an individual (who she did not know was Yeardley at that point) was avoiding her during a patrol in the middle of the night. After intercepting the individual and identifying him as Steven Yeardley, she placed him in custody.

"If the proposed rules and regulations around street checks were then in effect, Yeardley would have very easily been able to evade the police," says Chapman. "He was at that time a person convicted of a very violent crime who was at that time breaking his terms of release, and that officer would not have had the tools to determine his identity."

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