



Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It is truly a great honor and a privilege for me to be able to serve as President of the OACP. During these current times, I come to you virtually with a great sense of respect, reverence, and anticipation on embarking on what will certainly be one of the greatest challenges of a lifetime, but also one of the greatest opportunities of a lifetime.

To continue in the footsteps of dedicated police leaders like Chief McNeely and all of our Past Presidents who answered the calling to assist our respective police organizations and to serve police professionals in our province and the people of Ontario, is both humbling and a commitment that I am dedicated to fulfilling.

I have had the privilege to work and learn from many of you over the years and I am looking forward to continuing our great working relationship, certainly, as we remain committed to providing leadership and working in collaboration with our policing and justice partners, government decision makers, and our several OACP committees/working groups, on issues of common concern.

As we all know so very well, these are challenging times for us and our profession, but times of challenge provides opportunity and times for change. We must always listen carefully to the people we serve and to our police members. As police leaders, we must always devote ourselves to pursuing change in policing that helps build safe and just communities. To this end, we continue to work with government on the regulations for the Community Safety and Policing Act that will further provide opportunity to modernize policing and enhance community safety in Ontario.

There are many common issues between us as police leaders and other policing stakeholders. We must think both about today's short-term public safety and community wellness needs as well as our long-term organizational responsibilities. Many of these principle tenets overlap and remediation requires a multi-sectoral integrated approach to service delivery. Our committed efforts will continue to support and advocate, mitigating issues around community decay, in respect to mental health, addictions, homelessness and poverty. The Community Safety and Well Being Plan along with our Situational Tables will facilitate our shared commitment towards caring community connections, but alternative service delivery models that expand the roles for more appropriate entities' and Social Services, in taking the lead to address complex social issues, needs to be further examined and actively pursued.

Equally important is our continued efforts in addressing what my colleague and friend from Ottawa, Chief Peter Sloly would refer to as the "ism's". The acknowledgement of systemic racism, biases, barriers and stereotypes is the first step that validates the impact it has had on our respective organizations and communities. However, we must further recognize that it does not just exist in our profession, but also at a societal level and within many of our systems and processes. These issues were not created overnight and as a result, a continued



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long-term proactive commitment to engaging with issues surrounding equity, diversity and inclusion to better reflect the needs of Ontarians, will create a pathway to enhancing police legitimacy, transparency , accountability and most importantly, public trust.

As champions of equity, diversity and inclusion, we recognize that above all else, our member's diverse backgrounds and experiences contribute to the success and continued evolution of our respective organizations and profession. No one would refute that our most important resource is our members and for this reason, member wellness and mental health promotion remains a critical priority for the OACP. We must continue to provide the most current wellness services and support in tackling all operational stress injuries, while further addressing some of the issues we have with the way WSIB is handling our member's cases and the process overall.

These are just some of the issues our Association will continue to advocate, lobby and work on our collective behalf. I appreciate that these are not easy topics to discuss and even more challenging to address and resolve. However, as policing professionals we have always chosen courage over comfort and as Sir Winston Churchill once said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts". Today our OACP Board, staff and membership are ready for the next chapter in our future and excited about the future of our noble profession.

Stay safe and all the best to everyone!

- Chief Gary Conn, Chatham-Kent Police Service, OACP President