



***Racism, in any form, is evil.***

## **A Statement by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police**

Racism, in any form, is evil. Recent demonstrations across North America have made it clear that racism – and specifically systemic racism – is an evil that continues to plague our society. As police professionals, we must be clear in denouncing it and fighting against racism, which drives a wedge between our dedicated police members and the public each of us has taken an oath to serve. We must also acknowledge that there is still work to be done to eliminate systemic racism in our own organizations and in our processes.

For the past week, my fellow police leaders in Ontario and I have taken time to listen and learn from members of all racialized communities. Since the horrific images from Minneapolis first surfaced, we have heard from many members of our communities about the pain and suffering that racism brings. As police leaders, we felt that while posting statements condemning racism was important, it is simply not enough.

As police leaders, we believe that we must listen first to communities that are in pain.

We believe that our communities must speak first and we must listen before we, too, speak.

We must learn from those communities.

We must ask honest questions of ourselves our fellow police professionals and our profession.

As police leaders we have been grappling with the sinister reality of racism in our profession and in our society for years. While there have been advancements when it comes to the relationships between police services and racialized communities, the events of this week highlight just how much work has yet to be done. We know we cannot do this work alone and that the profession of policing exists within a framework linked to other agencies and organizations that also have to come together in order to eliminate systemic racism. Far too often, our police personnel are placed on the front lines in dealing with issues such as mental health, addictions, and poverty and are asked to use enforcement when other systems have failed. Community safety and well-being are created through an interconnected web that must work together.

As police professionals, we have been listening to the heartbreak and the anger of communities who continue to be affected by racism. Black and indigenous communities across Canada in particular have spoken out about the hurt that racism brings to them and their families every day.

As police leaders, we must do more than simply say that we oppose racism. We must admit that as police professionals, we bear our own particular responsibility for the social injustice that affects so many of our communities. We are part of Canadian society. When we as a society fail to live up to the high ideals we espouse as Canadians, then police leaders have an obligation to admit this and commit to making real changes to how we deliver policing services.

We must acknowledge the hurt and pain of Black communities and we must also acknowledge the hurt and pain of other communities who experience the horrendous effects of racism, sometimes at the hands of their police services. Indigenous communities continue to suffer from the effects of colonialism as well as racism. Racialized communities continue to suffer from racism. Ontario's 2SLGBTQ+ communities continue to experience discrimination. As police leaders, we must be honest in admitting our role in systemic racism.

Many of Ontario's police leaders have been speaking out locally over the last few days about the need to fight racism in its many forms. Many of us have emphasized the need to work with racialized communities, to listen, and to learn. Many of us have stated that we need greater accountability not only from our own organizations, but from oversight bodies whose absence from the conversation in the form of hiding behind processes and not communicating with our communities in a timely fashion only exacerbates the hurt, pain, and mistrust.

As police leaders in Ontario, we must affirm our commitment to fighting racial profiling. That begins by acknowledging systemic racism and making real commitments to working with all communities on meaningful change. Communities expect real change from us as police professionals. They expect us to be part of delivering justice.

To the many Ontarians from racialized community who are suffering from the pain of racism, we want to acknowledge your pain and pledge to do our part to eradicate racism and its effects when it comes to delivering bias-free policing.

As police professionals committed to serving all communities, it pains us when we hear that some in our communities fear the police; that they fear calling the police when they are in trouble; that they worry about the outcomes if police are involved in situations where they need help. We must change that. We must earn your trust each and every day. The change starts with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Pedersen", written in a cursive style.

Chief Paul Pedersen  
OACP President