

Good morning,

Thank you Al for the warm introduction and for all of you joining me this morning.

Based on our collective hard work, last year we introduced a new OPP billing model that was more fair and transparent.

I want to thank municipalities for implementing this new billing model in your communities.

We committed to you at that time that the sustainability of policing was a top priority for our government and to work with you on this important issue.

So I was proud to announce our new Strategy for a Safer Ontario last week to effectively and sustainably build an even safer, stronger province.

The foundation of that vision is safer, stronger communities because we know that when communities

plan together, and work together – they achieve better results for their residents.

These values must be made real in rural communities, on First Nation reserves, and our urban centres – in all our diverse communities across Ontario.

For us, community means both the policing community and the communities they serve.

That is why we have spent the past decade strengthening our partnerships with police services ...

... increasing targeted funding for local priorities and investing in the things that matter most to our families.

Funding to municipalities and municipal police services from our government have steadily increased over the past decade...

... and it has increased again this year.

We have seen the positive results of this approach.

Ontario is now one of the safest jurisdictions in North America.

Since 2003, Ontario's crime rate has dropped by 34% and Ontario's violent crime rate dropped by 27%.

In fact, Ontario has had the lowest crime rate of any province and territory every year since 2005.

So I know that after hearing that, you must be asking yourself the same question I did.

As we see crime rates steadily dropping across the country, why is the cost of delivering these services not doing the same?

Well, for one thing, the nature of crime is changing and we are trying to confront 21st century issues with a policing model designed in the 19th century.

Here is what I mean by that.

The Police Services Act was written in 1990, and has basically remained unchanged over the past 25 years.

Now take a moment to think about how the rest of the world has changed during that time.

The issues faced by today's police officers are more complex than ever anticipated when the current policies and police frameworks were developed.

Here are just a couple of examples:

The increasing complexity and global nature of internet-based crimes like child exploitation, financial fraud and cyber-bullying.

The rapid acceleration of technology and how it would be used by society and in policing.

And ...

... the increasing frequency of police interacting with vulnerable individuals – including those suffering from mental health or addiction issues.

Furthermore, we are increasingly asking our police officers to do more and to play a larger role in our communities.

For example...OPP Officers responded to 24,000 more calls for service last year than they did in 2009.

A police officer should not, at the same time, need to be a social worker, mental health worker or youth counsellor.

But these are the roles we often call on them to fill.

We recently heard from Chief Al Frederick in Windsor who said that 20 percent of the calls his police officers respond to are emergencies, with the remaining 80 percent dealing with mental health, domestic violence and other social issues.

This increasing complexity and the increased demands on our police officers mean we must realign our current approach to reflect these realities.

A police officer's job is protecting our communities – providing a safe environment for other social service agencies and professionals to do their jobs effectively.

This realignment will help police officers focus on what they do best – responding to emergencies, solving crimes and keeping people safe.

We, and our police services have worked hard to make our communities safe...

... Now we must work SMARTER to make our communities SAFER.

I am consistently impressed by the level of dedication and service demonstrated by our police officers every day to keep us safe.

In fact, recognition and appreciation for the outstanding work our officers and police services do was something delegates mentioned in almost every meeting I have had here over the last couple of days.

And I know that providing effective policing in your communities and for your residents is a top priority for you – but that it must also be sustainable.

So building on three years of work with the Future of Policing Advisory Committee...

... our government is poised to take our policing and municipal partners' recommendations to develop and introduce new legislation.

Our new strategy – which represents the largest policing transformation in Ontario in 25 years – is our government's blueprint of what effective, sustainable, and community-based policing will be in Ontario.

It is about finding smarter and better ways to do things - and using evidence and experience to improve outcomes.

I want to thank the members of the Future of Policing Advisory Committee:

The Police Association of Ontario

The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario

The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards

Toronto Police Service

Toronto Police Services Board

Toronto Police Association

The City of Toronto

The Ontario Provincial Police

The Ontario Provincial Police Association

The Ontario Senior Officers Police Association

And many others for their dedication, feedback, and input to help us develop our blueprint for policing in the 21st century.

At the heart of strategy is a focus on collaborative partnerships that include police and other partners such as education, health care and social services working together to make communities safer.

That means that if mandatory education programs do a better job of reducing crime than mandatory minimum sentences - than that is what we will focus on.

Developing this integrated approach recognizes that proactive, community-focused partnerships produce better results at lower costs to the taxpayer.

The cornerstone of our new strategy is the Community Safety and Well-Being Plans in every part of the province - built on the belief that building a safer community takes every community member.

Community Safety and Well-Being Plans will be developed by the local community, and based on locally identified priorities in order to meet the diverse needs of distinct communities.

They will help reduce the demand for a reactive, resource intensive emergency response by developing a collaborative, and proactive approach where community partners share information and work together with police on early intervention opportunities.

This helps prevent crimes, and improves outcomes for local residents and the community by making sure they are receiving the right response, at the right time, and by the right responders.

This is the same idea behind the Situation Table Model and the community safety and well-being initiatives, which are being created around the province.

These projects bring police and social service providers together to work collaboratively and rapidly mobilize services that will reduce risks that could lead to victimization or harm.

We have been piloting the development of Community Safety and Well-Being Plans and Situation Tables across the province in large cities, small towns and First Nations communities – from north to south.

For example,

I had a great meeting yesterday with Mayor Bernice Jenkins of the Town of Bancroft who shared with me her town's community safety and well-being plan.

I want to recognize Lianne Sauter, Bancroft's Deputy Clerk, who led the development of the plan.

Lianne brought together local social agencies to identify safety priorities and build Partnership Groups to develop evidence-based, effective, and sustainable social development strategies.

Another great example is what Brantford is doing to provide better supports for individuals and families in crisis.

I had a great meeting with Mayor Chris Friel about the Safe Brantford Initiative.

This is an outstanding program that shows that building safe communities must go beyond simply policing ...

...they must be aligned with other initiatives like Smart Brantford and Healthy Brantford to develop community-based responses across the social service spectrum.

September will mark six months of their operation for Community Response Team table – and in that time this collaborative model has assisted over 170 individuals and families – delivering positive change for Brantford.

And we know that these Situation Table models work.

Let me share with you the data from one the longest running pilot programs which is the Community Mobilization and Gateway Hub in North Bay.

North Bay is a mid-size northern town with a population of approximately 65,000.

The program has been operating for just over a year now.

In that time, over 200 cases have been brought forward to the Gateway Hub table, and it has supported over 290 individuals.

Most of those cases were brought to the table by police.

But what is really important is that other social agencies, such as the CAS and CMHA were the lead response in the majority of those cases.

Further, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit found that 93% of community agencies that participated in the Hub found that collaboration between agencies improved and 96% believed that their relationships did as well.

These models cut down on the demand for the mid and late stream enforcement style crisis response that we know is very costly by providing opportunities for early intervention that help prevent crimes and improve outcomes for local residents and the community.

And these models make police services part of a stronger safety net, rather than being the entire net themselves.

This frees up resources to help solve crimes and prevent even more from happening in the first place.

These early interventions, and ability to better prevent crimes will bend the cost curve and deliver sustainable and effective policing.

They reduce calls for service, and deliver positive results for individuals at a lower cost to the taxpayer.

Another key part of the strategy is exploring new approaches to strengthen governance and oversight for both the OPP, and municipal police services.

We have heard from both the OAPSB and AMO about the importance of this issue.

We have been working with them as we move forward on enhancing governance and oversight by:

- Laying out clear roles and duties;
- Professionalizing the composition of the board and increasing competencies and training for members; and

- Strengthening performance measurements and responsibilities for oversight bodies and their members.

The other key pillars of our Strategy for a Safer Ontario include:

Improving interactions between police and vulnerable Ontarians by enhancing frontline response to persons in crisis and addressing the increasing number of mental health related calls that could be more appropriately handled by other community service providers.

Modernizing core police responsibilities to ensure we have the right personnel to provide the right response at the right time.

Enhancing Training Requirements (including anti-bias training) and providing more continuous training throughout an officer's career so they have the tools and training to deal with current and future public safety needs.

Creating an effective and responsible approach for the expanded use of technology.

I know that this is a priority for AMO and its members – and something that was highlighted in their recently released modernization report

Developing a provincial framework for First Nations policing that ensures equitable and culturally responsive policing for First Nations communities; and

Moving forward on Outcome-Based Performance and Reporting Requirements to increase public transparency; updating the current system of provincial inspections for regulatory compliance.

Our plan is to consult with our FPAC partners and our communities through regional consultations starting this fall and through the winter and I look forward to working with all of you as we develop and introduce our new legislation.

Our new strategy is a proactive approach that is reflected across our government through the enhanced Youth Action Plan, developing Community Hubs, the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the mental health initiatives through the Health Care Action Plan.

This alignment will be so important as we break down silos and expand the existing links with other ministries and public sector organizations to plan for community safety and well-being.

Thank you again for inviting me to this important conference and for allowing me to talk about our government's vision to build safer, stronger communities.

Our Strategy for a Safer Ontario is ambitious, it is bold, it will be guided by evidence and will be focused on the most important outcome – building safer communities.

We must embrace this opportunity - now is time to set the course for an effective, sustainable, and community-focused model of policing for the 21st century.