

Minister of Public Safety



Ministre de la Sécurité publique

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0P8

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Mr. Robert Oliphant, M.P.  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Oliphant:

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to respond to the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, entitled, *Healthy Minds, Safe Communities: Supporting Our Public Safety Officers through a National Strategy for Operational Stress Injuries*. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Committee for undertaking this important study, and to express my appreciation to the experts who appeared before the Committee to share their views.

Canada's public safety officers play a critical role in keeping our communities safe from a range of threats, putting their lives on the line to protect us. In the course of their daily work, public safety officers are repeatedly exposed to traumatic incidents that can have a profound and lasting impact. These repeated exposures can affect their mental health and personal resilience, and can result in operational stress injuries (i.e. persistent psychological difficulties, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, which are known to result from operational duties performed while serving as a public safety officer).

Resources that target the unique mental health needs of public safety officers vary significantly across Canada. At the federal level, the Government has in place several initiatives to support the mental health of public safety officers, including research funding opportunities under the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and Employee Assistant Programs. Within federal public safety organizations, initiatives such as peer support, training, and return-to-work programming are instrumental in supporting public safety officers. There are opportunities to leverage and build on these initiatives to provide public safety officers with the support they need.

The Committee's Report presents important considerations to inform the Government's approach to supporting those who have dedicated their lives to protecting our communities. Consistent with my mandate letter commitment, I am working with my colleague, the Minister of Health, and provinces and territories, to develop a coordinated action plan on post-traumatic stress injuries in support of public safety officers. Budget 2016 reiterated the Government's commitment to ensuring that public safety officers have the support and treatment they need when facing post-traumatic stress disorder, and I am confident that the Committee's Report will guide the development of the action plan.

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To date, the Government has engaged a number of national stakeholders on the development of the action plan, including public safety organizations, all levels of government, academia, mental health professionals, and not-for-profit organizations. Feedback from these consultations has been invaluable, with strong parallels to the Committee's observations and recommendations. In particular, the Government has heard directly from public safety officers that they need better prevention and early intervention with respect to post-traumatic stress injuries, more research and awareness, reduction of stigma, and enhanced support for diagnosis, care and treatment.

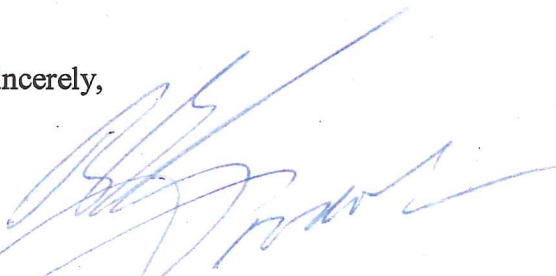
Consistent with the Committee's recommendations, the Government acknowledges the needs articulated by Canada's public safety officers and agrees that, in recognition of the daily challenges that are unique to the public safety officer community, national leadership and alignment are necessary in order to effectively address this multidisciplinary issue.

The Government also recognizes that national consolidation and dissemination of research and data is fundamental to supporting public safety officers from coast to coast to coast. Increased access to prevention, education and training measures is needed in order to help reduce stigma, and Canada's public safety officers need support for accessible, innovative care and treatment options that work.

Furthermore, the Government agrees that there are existing national capabilities, expertise and tools that can be leveraged to better support public safety officers (e.g., federal health research frameworks, and similar work being undertaken to support military personnel and veterans). In this regard, I will continue to work with the Minister of Health, provincial/territorial colleagues, public safety organizations and other key stakeholders to support the resilience of Canada's public safety officers.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for its comprehensive Report. The Report will be a valuable resource as the Government moves forward with its commitment to supporting the well-being and resilience of Canada's public safety officers.

Yours sincerely,



The Honourable Ralph Goodale, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness