

Police focused on community outreach during Crime Prevention Week



The importance of community outreach and action was underscored at the York Regional Police's Aurora headquarters on Monday morning as representatives from the YRP, Peel Regional Police, Toronto Police Service, and Durham came together to launch Crime Prevention Week.

Running through November 8, community outreach and engagement is an overarching theme of the week, and representatives urged residents to be partners in addressing criminal activity.

"Crime prevention isn't just a one-week campaign; it's a core function of what we do every day," said Peel Regional Police Deputy Chief Mark Dapat. "It's the foundation of what policing is all about: preventing harm before it happens and helping people feel safe where they live, where they work, and where they gather.

"This week and every week, we are highlighting the power of collaboration and the difference we make when police, government and communities come together with one shared goal – that is a safer, stronger neighbourhood."

Police services across Ontario are investing in crime prevention through early intervention, youth engagement, and partnerships that "support our most vulnerable residents," he said, adding that is a reflection of their drive to identify "local risks and address them before they lead to a crisis-driven response that our officers across the Province are responding to at alarming rates."

"The commitment to this work is a force multiplier in ensuring that police respond quickly to emergencies and relentlessly pursue criminals, and, in particular, those criminals that commit violent and serious crime," he said. "We know that no one chooses to be a victim of crime, and that prevention starts with awareness, early intervention and partnership."

The power of collaboration can be seen in Peel Region, an area he said saw a surge in pharmacy robberies in 2021 – up 238 per cent over the previous year. Incidents rose by a further 400 per cent the following year as offenders targeted narcotics, including fentanyl.

"In response to this, our robbery bureau partnered with the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to develop strategies that focus on prevention," he said. "Through this partnership, a provincial mandate was established for pharmacies to implement time-delayed safes in all community pharmacies. The time-delayed safe initiative was pivotal in Peel Region, leading to a significant reduction in retail robberies and a major enhancement for community safety through the reduction of the illegal drug supply being trafficked within our communities.

"The results speak for themselves. In 2023, pharmacy robberies in Peel dropped by 59%. In 2024, they fell another 75%. So far in 2025, 75% of the attempted robberies have been unsuccessful thanks to these preventative measures. These results represent more

than statistics. They represent lives protected, trauma prevented and community confidence restored.?

Speaking on behalf of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Dapat added that they're committed to developing programs and strategies that both prevent crime and support victims and survivors.

From a York Region Perspective, Deputy Chief Kevin McCloskey noted the rise of smash and grab robberies in the area, as well as distraction thefts, and criminals becoming ?bolder and more brazen.?

?I understand the concerns of our community members. At the end of the day, we all want to keep ourselves and our families and our property safe and secure. We should be able to enjoy the neighbourhoods we live in without feeling like we need to look over our shoulder,? he said. ?At York Regional Police, we believe crime prevention is a shared responsibility ? and while the police may take that lead, citizens do have the chance to play a huge role in preventing crimes from occurring. Much like a triangle, crime needs three points to connect. First, you need a criminal's desire to commit a crime. Then, you need a target. And last, you simply need an opportunity. Eliminating each point of a triangle is an effective crime prevention strategy, and it begins with education and awareness, empowering all members of our community, and it starts in your neighbourhood.

?Through mentorship, through collaboration, visibility, programming, and engaging with youth, we can put a stop to crime before youth are enticed to commit the crime in the first place. Our youth engagement team continues to build bridges between police and youth because the youth are the people who are the future of our region?.And as police services, we need to empower residents and commercial property owners to do little things, because at your homes and businesses, it's all the little things you can do that make a big difference in deterring criminals, allowing you to safeguard yourself and your property.?

These ?little things? that can have a big impact include installing security cameras and motion-detection lights outside your property, registering security cameras with police, trimming trees and shrubs in your yard to make your home more visible from the street, and improving sightlines.

?We also want members of the public to work directly with the police. Sign up for Neighborhood Watch. Sign up for our security camera registry. And of course, if you see something, say something. Look out for yourself and your neighbors, and call Police if you notice something out of the ordinary in your neighborhood. We will respond. This is how you can help us, because I can tell you, all across this province, we are working very hard to identify and arrest criminals who are committing violent offenses and other crimes.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter