

Digital evidence program launches for police services

Written By Alyssa Parkhill

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Provincial government is implementing new technology to further assist police services in identifying, managing and sharing digital evidence.

On Jan. 19, Solicitor General Sylvia Jones was joined with Attorney General Doug Downey, Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy as well as Chief of Peel Regional Police Nishan Duraipah and other Provincial and Municipal officials to announce the introduction of the Digital Evidence Management (DEM) program.

"Last week, we introduced the rollout of eIntake in Northwestern Ontario, the second region to adopt the digital platform. This is a major step in our government's work to modernize and streamline the justice system," said Solicitor General Jones.

The eIntake initiative allows officers to file criminal charges to the court digitally, as well as allowing Justices of the Peace to enter decisions and sign important documents along with requesting additional information, all digitally.

As we travel further into the digital age, this new investment by the Ontario government will ensure police officers spend less time filing paperwork at a desk, and more time on the road, investigating crimes and being in the community.

The DEM program has been designed and will be delivered by Axon Public Safety Canada after being selected by the Province.

Axon is a leading public safety technology company creating software, devices and apps to better protect the community and equip police officers with advanced technology.

"Axon is a global leader in connecting law enforcement technologies, evidence management and file sharing [between] Peel Region Police, and the Toronto Police Service," said Jones.

Police officers in Peel and in Toronto will be equipped with Axon body cameras with digital support and streaming capabilities. Through the DEM program, police services and justice system partners will be able to store, manage and share digital evidence wherever in the province for investigations, prosecutions etc.

The program will also allow police officers to engage with the public for assistance and allow members of the community to upload evidence directly to the system.

"Digital evidence management is a critical piece of a comprehensive digital justice system that will help reduce delays in Ontario's overburdened court system, eliminate costly duplication along the investigation to prosecution cycle, support the seamless and real-time sharing of evidence and information," said Jones.

Peel Regional Police is excited to be a part of the program and to enhance public safety through the new advanced technology.

"Our participation as an early adopter in the Province's digital evidence management solution is in line with our vision to be the most connected and technologically innovative police service in Canada," said Chief of Peel Regional Police Nishan Duraipah. "Peel Police recognizes the importance of having our organization and its frontline members adapt to the changing digital public safety environment."

The program will be available to Provincial enforcement agencies including the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), the Correctional

Services Oversight, and Investigations (CSOI) unit alongside municipal and First Nations police services.

“The PAO (Police Association of Ontario) is confident in the partnership between the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Axon Public Safety Canada to execute and support this important system,” said Bruce Chapman, President of PAO. “The PAO has had an ongoing relationship with Axon for the past few years, and I’ve always been impressed with their innovative approach to supporting policing through speaking opportunities at PAO events. Axon has expressed its commitment to continuing to educate our police association leaders on the changing world of technology and its impact on the policing profession.”

Managing Director of Axon, Vishal Dhir, joined the meeting to share Axon's excitement on working alongside the Provincial government and further providing police services with new digital technology.

“This digital evidence management initiative is part of the Ontario Onwards action plan, and it underscores an important part of police work that the general public is not usually aware of since joining Axon. One of the key learnings that stands out to me today is really how much police work happens behind the scenes. And I can assure you, it’s nothing like we see on TV shows,” exclaimed Vishal Dhir, Managing Director of Axon.

“Creating efficiencies and helping the members of the police services in Ontario,” he added, “streamline evidence management and support timely submissions to the courts is something we’ve witnessed worldwide that can have a great impact on the effectiveness of the justice system and better service delivery for the public.”