

Media Release

Ontario Police Chiefs Call on Government of Ontario to Require All Gasoline Pumps to Have Pre-Payment Technology to Prevent Gas-and-Dash Thefts

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(Toronto, ON) – The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) is calling on the Government of Ontario to develop legislation/regulations which would mandate the use of gasoline pumps equipped and activated with 24 hour pre-payment technology in order to counter a sharp increase in so-called “gas-and-dash thefts” across the province.

“Gas-and-dash thefts are a 100% preventable crime. In Ontario, they have caused unnecessary injuries and death to service station employees and these events continue to increase in frequency,” said OACP President Chief Kimberley Greenwood. “Police services across the Province continue to allocate resources to respond to these preventable crimes, impacting our ability to respond to other community priorities.”

Police services have been contacting the OACP to report their concerns about the public safety issues related to these types of crimes and also to highlight the significant impact it has on police resources when having to respond to these thefts. For example, York Regional Police (YRP) experienced a 30 percent increase in gas thefts over the last two years and they expect the trend to continue. With close to 2,000 occurrences of gas theft every year, YRP police officers and investigators are spending more than 7,000 hours of time responding to and investigating gasoline drive-offs, incurring costs that are estimated to be more than \$600,000 annually. Given the nature of gas-and-dash thefts, an overwhelming majority (approximately 91 percent of these occurrences) in York Region do not result in criminal charges.

Durham Regional Police Service reported that between 2012 and 2018, a total of 4,582 gas-and-dash incidents have occurred in the Region – an average of 655 each year – while as of October 29, 2018, there were 1,004 gas thefts reported by Peel Regional Police. In 2017, there were 1,115 and in 2016, there were 844. The numbers have been increasing annually since 2012, when there were 411 gas-and-dash thefts.

Even our smaller police services are reporting an increase in gas-and-dash thefts. For example, Owen Sound Police Service saw an increase in such incidents from eight (8) in 2015, to 19 in 2016, 22 in 2017, and 19 to date in 2018.

“Pre-payment technology already exists at 97% of all gasoline stations in Ontario, although it is not always being used by the owners at these locations,” said Chief Greenwood. “Increasingly, consumers are using technology such as Smartphone mobile apps and debit and credit card TAP, which makes it easier and convenient for consumers to pre-pay for gasoline purchases.”

Mandatory pre-payment already exists in other provinces. British Columbia and Alberta have eliminated virtually all incidents and calls for service to the police relating to gas-and-dash thefts by enacting supportive legislation.



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