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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GROUNDBREAKING THREAT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL PROMOTES SAFER SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES THROUGH INFORMATION SHARING

Local students, families and communities will benefit from a groundbreaking protocol signed today by both local school boards, several police services and hospitals, and a wide range of community agencies.

Close to 20 organizations serving the community officially signed the new Community Threat Assessment Protocol: A Collaborative Response to Assessing Violence Potential. The document will serve as a guide for schools and organizations to work together in identifying and preventing potential acts of serious violence.

The comprehensive protocol outlines how schools and school boards will work with police services and other community partners to:

- identify and assess individuals who may pose a high risk for violence
- share relevant information
- respond to high risk behaviours
- follow up with required supports and programs to prevent violent acts.

“We have been informed that the Ministry of Education and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police are using our locally-developed protocol as part of provincial discussions on threat assessment,” says Diane Lloyd, Chairperson of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (KPR). “This protocol is the culmination of more than a year of intensive, collaborative work, initiated by our Board and involving representatives of over two dozen agencies and organizations. By working closely with our community partners to draft and implement this important document, we are making our schools and communities safer.”

“We are pleased to be among the leading school boards in Ontario to develop such a community-based protocol,” notes Rusty Hick, Director of Education of the KPR Board. “Our ultimate goal is twofold: to identify, as soon as possible, any individuals who pose a risk of serious violence to themselves or others, and to ensure steps are taken to support those individuals and protect the community. We are committed to making our school environments as safe as possible, and we know our community partners share in that commitment and responsibility.”

“Dealing with the aftermath of school violence is painful and recovery is often tentative and long-term,” says Dave Bernier, Board Chairperson for the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNCC). “It is far better to assess threat makers than to assess victims in the aftermath. By signing this protocol, we have reinforced the importance of schools having advance discussions among school and community partners as to how we will respond using a broad range of expertise.”

“The safety of our students and staff is of the utmost importance to all of us, and this unique partnership agreement promotes prevention and early intervention to prevent traumatic events,” states John Mackle, Director of Education for the PVNCC Board. “The community threat assessment protocol is one of several strategies and programs in our Catholic Board’s Safe School policies and best practices. It establishes and formalizes a communication pathway for professionals to make decisions about the most appropriate interventions to keep our schools safe.”

"The Threat Assessment model we are subscribing to brings to bear the expertise from every discipline and profession in a proactive manner, to ensure an appropriate intervention," states Murray Rodd, Chief of the Peterborough Lakefield Community Police Service. "Safer schools and ultimately a safer community will be the result."

“The protocol itself is an amazing accomplishment by the school boards, with feedback from agencies,” notes Shelley Lawrence, Manager, John Howard Society of Durham Region. “Just as important, KPR has provided top-notch threat assessment training to school staff, community services and agencies across the district, so we can learn and work together for the benefit of our communities. We now have a shared understanding, language and process to deal with threats that affect the safety of our children, schools and communities.”

“The Children’s Aid Society of Northumberland is pleased to have participated in the development of the protocol and today to be a signatory on this important safety protocol,” says Rosaleen Cutler, Executive Director. “This initiative provides an effective means for our organization to further support the safety of children and youth in their school community. Our participation reflects our ongoing commitment to collaborate with partners to assess risk and prevent traumatic events. Everyone has a responsibility to protect children and youth and contribute to the safety of the community. This protocol increases our broader community's capacity to respond effectively in providing appropriate prevention and intervention services for children, youth and their families, and the school community.”

The protocol is based on the work of Kevin Cameron, Director of the Canadian Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response, based in Alberta. Cameron has been instrumental in development of the protocol, and in training staff from the local school boards and community organizations on recognizing and responding to individuals who pose a threat of violence.

"It is a great privilege to work alongside the school district, police and community agencies throughout the Kawartha Pine Ridge region who have done the often complex yet rewarding job of developing a collaborative model for violence threat risk assessment," says Cameron. "They have crafted a violence prevention program and multi-agency protocol that is a national standard in the evolving field of multidisciplinary community threat assessment protocols."

Threat assessment experts at the Ontario Provincial Police headquarters in Orillia and at Durham Regional Police Service also were consulted in development of the protocol.

The Community Threat Assessment Protocol will be implemented for all public and Catholic secondary schools in the area this September. Both school boards are planning to implement it in all elementary schools the following school year.

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