

# Police board gets mental health rundown

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Peterborough Lakefield police board members got a rundown on the service's in-house Canadian Mental Health Association employee during Tuesday's monthly board meeting.

Graham Harvey has been helping officers negotiate the ins and outs of mental health calls for about a year. His salary is paid by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. He has an office at the Water St. police station, he told board members, and spends his days going to mental-health related police calls, riding along with officers when he can and following up on calls that happen when he's not working.

His work has led to a reduction in the amount of time officers spend with mental health patients at the hospital, a reduction in repeated calls for service and increased mental health training for officers.

Police Chief Murray Rodd described Harvey as the "missing link," who has helped police improve their efficiency while ensuring that people are getting the help they need.

Harvey's presentation was followed by former city councillor Patti Peeters, who made an emotional presentation to the board about suicide in the city and county.

Stopping at times to gather her emotions and fight back tears, Peeters implored police to put more officers in classrooms to talk to youth about an issue she said is shrouded in secrecy.

Peeters touched on her family's struggles with suicide and mental illness and told the board that people need to be given the tools and a venue to discuss mental health and suicide.

She said she's gone to five funerals within the past month for people between the ages of 16 and 42, lost to suicide.

"We can't lose any more children in this community," Peeters said.

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