

Organizations come together to remind Ontarians to make the right call during COVID-19

OTTAWA – July 7, 2020

Ontario 211 Services has partnered with the Police Association of Ontario (PAO), Ontario Paramedic Association (OPA) and Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (OAFIC) to let Ontarians know how to “Make the Right Call” for help during a pandemic.

Life has changed dramatically because of COVID-19. Businesses were closed or forced to change how they operate, more than a million Ontarians lost their jobs, schools were closed, and we are all working hard at maintaining a physical distance to reduce the spread of the virus.

The pandemic has also created a new level of vulnerability in the province. Seniors are trying to keep safe while in need of help to access the basics; individuals and families face financial challenges and are struggling to put food on the table; and there are higher levels of stress and anxiety for everybody. Supports are available, but figuring out where to start can be daunting. That’s where 211 comes in.

“2-1-1 is the front door to critical social services in the community,” said Karen Milligan, Executive Director of Ontario 211 Services. “During the COVID-19 pandemic things have been changing rapidly and new benefits are being developed regularly. Our community navigators can help assess your needs and connect you to the services available.”

Of course, in an emergency when you require emergency assistance from police, paramedics, or firefighters, you shouldn’t hesitate to call 9-1-1.

“When you need emergency services and call 9-1-1, our front-line communications police personnel are there to take your call, assess the situation and dispatch it out accordingly. Our sworn officers in communities across Ontario are committed to responding to all calls for service efficiently as the public’s safety and well-being is our number one priority,” said PAO President, Bruce Chapman.

Paramedics across the province are urging patients not to wait if they have a medical emergency. Their teams are taking all necessary precautions and hospitals are a safe place to be.

“For life threatening emergencies, please dial 9-1-1 where available or use the emergency feature on your cellular phone. Ontario’s Paramedics are highly trained medical professionals bringing the Emergency Department to you,” said Darryl Wilton, President of the Ontario Paramedic Association.

President of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, Chief Cynthia Ross Tustin noted that since the onset of the pandemic, 9-1-1 calls for home and fatal fires in Ontario has increased.

“The best defence against an emergency in your home is prevention. Check to ensure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, plan and practice your home fire escape, and never leave cooking un-attended. Always call 9-1-1 in case of an emergency, and never ignore an alarm – get out, and stay out,” said Ross Tustin.

Over the next two weeks, 211 and our partner organizations will be sharing information about 9-1-1 vs. 2-1-1 across social media platforms to encourage Ontario residents to Make the Right Call. We’re asking the public to please share these messages to help us spread the word.

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About Ontario 211 Services

211 is a helpline available by phone, chat, or online search that helps Ontario residents navigate the complex network of government, health, community and social service quickly and easily. The service is offered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with interpretation in over 150 languages. 211 is supported by the Province of Ontario, United Ways and some municipalities across the province.

About the Police Association of Ontario

The Police Association of Ontario (PAO) is the official provincial representative body for 18,000 sworn and civilian police personnel from 47 local police associations across Ontario. A unifying voice for advocacy in policing, the PAO provides its member associations with representation, resource and support.

About the Ontario Paramedic Association

The Ontario Paramedic Association (OPA) is a registered 'not for profit' organization representing Paramedics across the province. Since its formation, the OPA has worked to enhance the professional image of paramedics, to improve communications between paramedics, and to lobby for improvements to the standards of patient care. We are committed to being an engaging and evidence-based organization that represents many of the finest paramedics in Canada.

About the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs' mission is to lead innovation and excellence in public and life safety. To achieve this, we provide a recognized, authoritative voice for all matters relating to the management and delivery of fire and emergency services in Ontario. We work cooperatively with the provincial government, key stakeholders, and other organizations to promote excellence and innovation in the areas of education and training, legislation and public policy, fire and membership services. We are the trusted advisor to the provincial government, key stakeholders and media on matters relating to public and firefighter safety.