



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services
by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario.*

April 5, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs Applauds New Mental Health Program for Families of Public Safety Personnel

[AJAX, ON] The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) extends its heartfelt appreciation to the Ontario government for launching the **Ontario Immediate Family Wellness Program**. This landmark initiative, backed by an investment of **\$3.18 million**, will provide crucial mental health services to eligible family members of public safety personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty or have died by suicide.

Program Highlights:

- **Support:** Compassionate assistance for grieving families of police officers, firefighters (municipal and First Nations), paramedics, ambulance communications officers and adult correctional services employees at no cost for up to two years after a death.
- **Eligibility:** Partners, parents, siblings, children, and identified significant people are eligible for this program.
- **Timely Access:** Families can access mental health services—such as crisis support, counselling, and therapy—by phone or online over a period of **two years**, ensuring timely support.
- **Comprehensive Services:**
 - **Crisis Support:** Professionals are available **24/7** for crisis intervention and care planning.
 - **Rapid Counselling:** Families receive rapid access to comprehensive counseling services.
 - **Proactive Care:** Support is provided regardless of location or specific needs.

The O AFC commends the government's commitment to supporting families during their most challenging moments and is confident that these measures will significantly contribute to the safety and effectiveness of fire services across Ontario. The Association also looks forward to continuing its strong partnership with the government and working together to ensure the safety and well-being of over 15 million Ontarians.



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services
by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario.*

Quote:

Public safety and emergency service workers serve the residents and visitors of Ontario around the clock in some of the most challenging and dangerous conditions imaginable. When these workers are killed in the line of duty, or when they die by suicide, it creates great loss for their families and co-workers.

The delivery of new services for the families of public safety heroes who were killed in the line of duty or have died by suicide is an admirable initiative by this government, one that is applauded by the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC).

—Deputy Chief Rob Grimwood, President, O AFC

About us:

Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC): The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) is a non-partisan, non-profit association that represents the Chief Fire Officers of the 437 fire departments in the Province of Ontario. The 437 fire departments are divided into 32 career fire departments, 43 composite fire departments and 362 volunteer fire departments. There are approximately 30,716 firefighters in Ontario including about 18,281 volunteer firefighters, 11,971 career firefighters and 464 part-time firefighters.

These Chief Fire Officers are ultimately responsible, by statute, for the management and delivery of fire, rescue, and emergency response to the 15 million residents of Ontario. We are the trusted advisor to government when it comes to public and firefighter safety. The O AFC supports initiatives designed to improve the fire and life safety of our members and all who reside in Ontario.

-30-

Media contact(s):

Karthik Swaminathan

Communications Strategist
Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs

Phone: +1 (905) 426-9865 x.1222

Email:

karthik.swaminathan@oafc.on.ca