

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf. 03 02-98-0009
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 28 September 1998

TO/DEST. 9-1-1 Management Board

FROM/EXP. Co-ordinator, 9-1-1 Management Board

SUBJECT/OBJET **USE OF 3-1-1 NUMBER FOR NON EMERGENCY CALLS**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the 9-1-1 Management Board receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

On 5 June 1998, the Management Board briefly discussed the use of a 3-1-1 number for non-emergency calls. The Bureau Manager had advised at that time that he had prepared a response to the use of this system and would make it available to the Board.

A copy of the Inspector's memorandum dated 8 June 1998, which was previously distributed to Board members in July, is appended.

*Approved by
Rosemary Nelson*

app.



**Ottawa-Carleton
Regional Police Service**

**Service de police régional
d'Ottawa-Carleton**

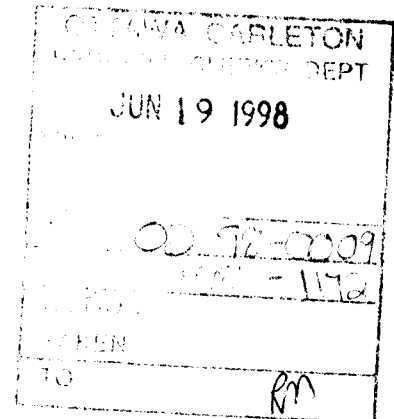
MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 8, 1998

TO: 911 Management Board

FROM: Ralph Erfle, Inspector
911 Bureau Manager

SUBJECT: **IMPLEMENTING A 311 NUMBER**



The use of a 311 number by police agencies including Ottawa-Carleton Police is a topic which arises occasionally due to the publicity received from Baltimore implementing it. It was mentioned at the last 911 Management Board meeting and I advised that I would submit this memo which briefly addresses some of the issues on the topic.

BACKGROUND

A 311 number is usually considered when the 911 call volumes are continually increasing at greater rates than would be expected with the population growth and there is a concern that the future of the 911 call volume will exceed the E911 system network, equipment, and staffing resources, causing delays in the handling of the 911 calls.

BALTIMORE

Baltimore is presently conducting a two year trial, using federal grant money to study the impact of 311 on 911. A common school of thought among analysts is that 311 may be of greater benefit in larger cities where call volumes are more difficult to manage and additional tools are needed. Baltimore, for example, averages 5,000 calls to 911 per day compared to Ottawa-Carleton which averages 500 per day. Prior to start up, Baltimore had no widely publicized seven digit number and their 911 call volumes were increasing. Additionally, considerable resources have been assigned to make it work.

KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

King County initiated a committee last September to conduct a study on the feasibility of implementing a 311 system. The committee was well represented of users and included elected officials. After several months of research and surveys the committee recommended that a 311 system not be implemented. Although, it is a large county and there were numerous reasons for the recommendation, note that the cost estimate was \$4.5 mil. for start-up and \$11.2 mil. for annual operating costs.

OTTAWA-CARLETON

In addition to the differences mentioned between Baltimore and Ottawa-Carleton there are numerous technological and operational issues to consider in planning a 311 Bureau. Some of these are:

- Noting that the 911 call volumes in Ottawa-Carleton have not increased over the past few years.
- Setting up a the toll free 311 telephone technology.
- Purchasing & installing "intelligent routing" software for 311 technology.
- Re-routing pre-existing telephone numbers.
- Marketing the 311 number.
- Staffing a 311 bureau in addition to a 911 bureau. (Baltimore assigned 12 additional staff to the 311 Bureau).
- Training for staff.
- Budgeting impact. (The U.S. Dept. Of Justice provided a grant to Baltimore. AT & T is not charging Baltimore network usage fees during the two year pilot project and Baltimore City has made a financial commitment to the project).

Ottawa-Carleton have designed a special "emergency page" outlined with a red border for the front of the 1998 Bell telephone directory. It clearly displays the seven digit number and extensions in order to facilitate easy access to the proper area or section when calling Ottawa-Carleton Police. This should alleviate some of the burden on 911. Additionally, we will be undertaking some marketing again this fall in conjunction with the 911 Youth Awards in order to reduce the volume of non-emergency calls received at 911.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Although I have not done any extensive research on the topic, I am of the opinion, based on reading the reports and articles from several sources, that our 911 system is not overburdened, and due the significant budget impact, there lacks significant justification to implement a 311 system in Ottawa-Carleton. If you would like any further information on this issue, please advise me.

Ralph Erfle
Inspector

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cc: