



**Ontario 211 Services Corporation**  
Annual Report 2008-09

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***Developing the Network***

Knowledge is power. Information is liberating.  
Education is the premise of progress,  
in every society, in every family.  
*Kofi Annan (7<sup>th</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations)*

Ontario 211 Services Corporation  
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## About 211

### Short History

#### 1997

In 1997, Atlanta, Georgia became the first community to introduce 211 service. In 2009, 2-1-1 serves over 240 million Americans (more than 80% of the entire population).

#### 2001

In response to an application by United Way of Canada – Centraide Canada and its partners, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) assigned 211 in Canada for toll free information and referral about community, social, health and government services.

#### 2002

In June, Toronto launched 211 service for callers in the 416/647 area code.

#### 2005

Niagara and Simcoe County launched their 211 services.

#### 2007

211 opens in Peel, Halton, and Windsor

#### 2008

211 opens in Thunder Bay, and Ottawa, extending reach to over 50% of Ontario residents; province commits funds for development and on-going operations

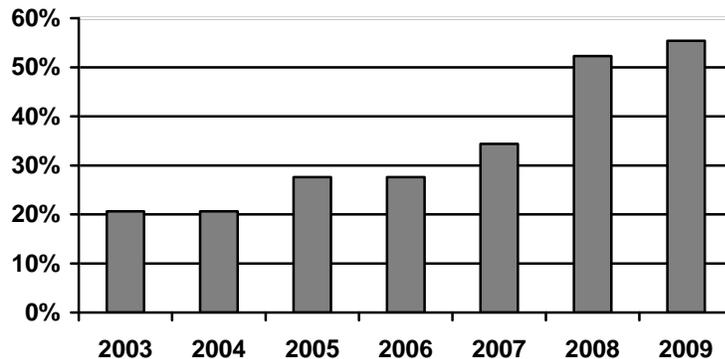
#### 2009

211 Ontario awarded “Community Builder of the Year” Award

211 is an easy-to-remember three-digit phone number providing free, confidential, multilingual access to information about the full range of community, social, health and government services. All 211 calls are answered by live operators, certified information specialists, who assess each caller’s needs and link them to the best available services and programs, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Currently 55% of Ontarians can reach 211 by phone for information about services and programs in their area.

Underlying the telephone service is a large database of 56,000 agencies and services throughout all regions of the Province. This is what our Information and Referral Specialists use to respond to calls. This database is also available on the internet at [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca).

### Growing Percentage of Ontarians Served



## Ottawa Launch Completes the Eight Hubs

September 19, 2008 marked not just the launch of 211 services in Ottawa but also the completion of the eight hub network throughout Ontario. These hubs act as the backbone for development of 211 services to all Ontarians.

Michael Allen, President/CEO, United Way/Centraide Ottawa, welcomed participants, special guests and the media to celebrate this special occasion. Speakers included John Myers, President of the Ontario 211 Services Corporation Board of Directors, Deborah Spurr, representing the 211 Canada Steering Committee, Peter Holt, Board Chair of the Community Information Centre of Ottawa, Diane Deans, City councillor, and Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services.

*The team responsible for launching 211 Ottawa poses for a picture with Hon. Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services (front row, centre) – back row (l to r): Michael Allen (UW/CO), Pam Hillier (Community Connections/211 Central East Ontario), Janet Whillans (UW/CO), Bill Morris (211 Ontario Services Corp.), Karen Milligan (UW/CO), Victoria Miles, Dennis Jackson (Board Chair, UW/CO); front row (l to r): Stacey Diffin-Lafleur (UW/CO), Marie-Andrée Carrière (211 Ottawa), Judy Grunwald (Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region), Deborah Spurr (United Way of Canada – Centraide Canada)*

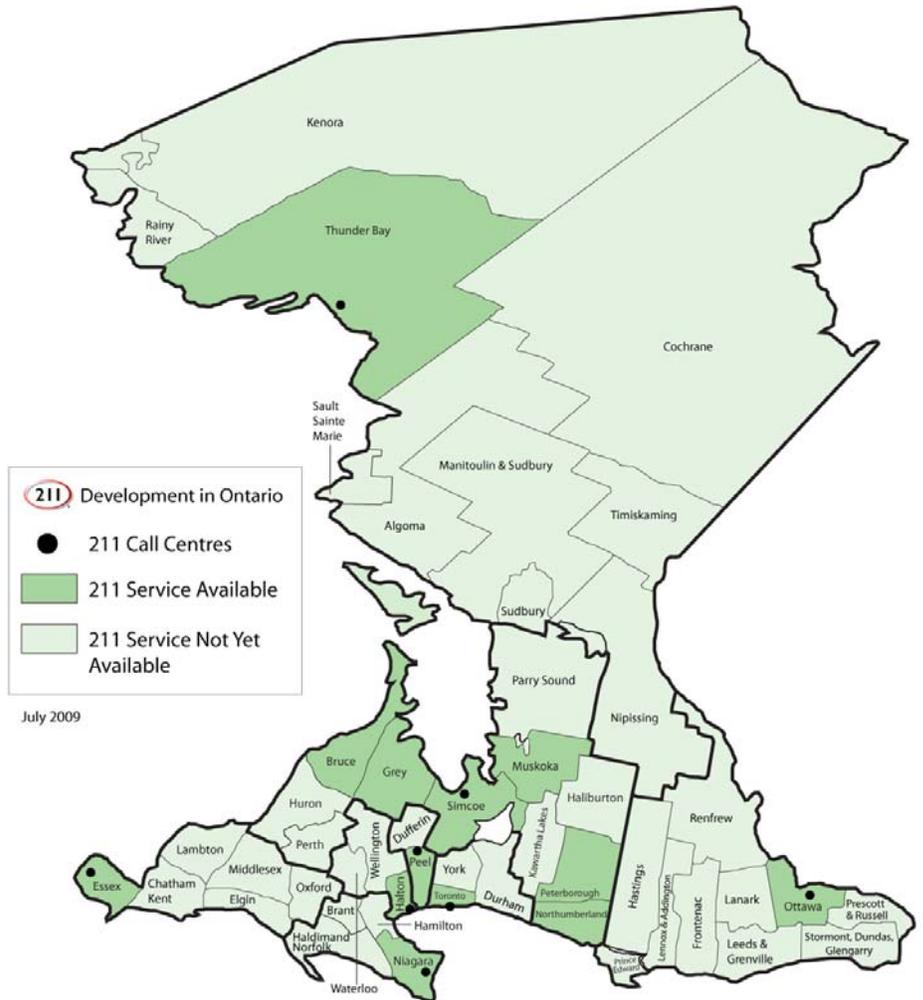


During the ceremony, Minister Meilleur confirmed provincial funding of more than \$13 million over four years. This will support expansion of 211 services to all Ontario residents, and the creation of Canada's first province-wide 211 service delivery system. To demonstrate the versatility and effectiveness of the system, Minister Meilleur placed the first call to 211 in Ottawa, seeking information for a constituent who is a new Canadian looking for ESL language classes for his wife and after-school classes for his children.

Marie-Andrée Carrière, Executive Director, Community Information Centre of Ottawa, related that “it was so exciting that Minister Meilleur attended our launch. As 211 becomes better known, it will be an indispensable service for those looking for help.”

Map 1: 211 Availability in Ontario, June 2009

## 211 Development in Ontario



The medium, or process, of our time - electric technology - is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action.

*Marshall McLuhan*

In 2008 Central Eastern Ontario region has piloted the expansion of 211 services outside its hub in Simcoe.

The benefits of such a system are overwhelming. The work of yourself and your committee members in making this dream become a reality is much appreciated.

*Hon. Michael Gravelle,  
MPP, Thunder Bay - Superior  
North*

*These are only some of the individuals who share in 211's success.  
Centre: Rosanna Thoms, Executive Director of Information Niagara holds the award.*

## 211 Ontario: Community Builder of the Year

At its April 2009 annual conference, the United Way of Canada – Centraide Canada bestowed its “Community Builder of the Year” award to the 211 Ontario initiative. The Community Builder Award recognizes a multi-sectoral project that involves partners, stakeholders, donors and volunteers and which has resulted in innovative efforts to build caring communities in Canada.

Receiving the award on behalf of 211 in Ontario, Bill Morris, Executive Director, Ontario 211 Services Corporation (O211SC), recognized the contributions made by so many, from the local Community Information centres, United Ways, municipalities, and the Province of Ontario. “The success of 211 in Ontario reflects the long, hard work of many individuals and agencies. The United Way of Canada – Centraide Canada was one of the key forces behind the CRTC decision in 2001. It was joined by United Ways throughout Ontario, working with community information centres and more recently, municipalities. Team work is an essential ingredient in our accomplishment.”



John Myers, President of the Board of Directors of O211SC extolled the efforts of the many participants who have helped developed the new service. “211 is a vital part of community resources enabling families and individuals get the help and information they need in a timely manner. The efforts of so many different organizations to get behind the initiative, speaks volumes to the impact that 211 has on people’s lives and their communities. But we’re only half way there – we’re focusing on the 50 percent of Ontarians who can’t access the 211 phone line.”

Bill Morris brought the Community Builder of the Year Award with him to the May 2009 InformOntario Symposium, where he invited all attendees involved in the 211 initiative as 211 operators and data providers to stand in recognition. Almost 90 percent of the audience stood with Bill demonstrating how 211 is the culmination of behind-the-scenes efforts of many individuals and organizations.

## What is the Ontario211 Services Corporation?

### Board members

Jim Alexander  
Ottawa

Winnie Chant  
Leamington

Kent Gillespie  
Mississauga

John Kwekkeboom  
Welland

John Myers (President)  
Collingwood

Wendy Savoy  
Thunder Bay  
(resigned May 2009)

Jocelyne St. Jean  
Ottawa

Mary Wilson Trider  
Toronto

Waqar Zaidi  
Oakville

Current staff includes  
Bill Morris, Executive Director  
and Philip Ferrao, Office  
Manager, with specific  
services provided by several  
consultants.

*Doug Barrington presenting award  
to O211SC Board of Directors.  
From left to right: Pam Hillier  
(representing Ontario 211 Operators  
Group), Mary Wilson Trider,  
Doug Barrington (United Way of  
Canada – Centraide Canada),  
John Myers (President, O211SC),  
John Kwekkeboom, Winnie Chant,  
Bill Morris (Executive Director,  
O211SC) and Waqar Zaidi.*

Ontario 211 Services Corporation (O211SC) was incorporated in 2007 with a mission to develop, sustain and improve an integrated Ontario 211 system. As a not-for-profit agency, it is responsible for licensing of 211 sites, approvals for telephone switching, branding and administering the on-going provincial contributions as we move to province-wide delivery.

### Vision

The vision of O211SC is to become *the* source for community information and resources throughout Ontario.

### Governance

O211SC is governed by a volunteer Board drawn from financial, community, health, and government backgrounds

### Priorities

A major concern of the Board is to meet funder expectations of 100% provincial coverage of 211 telephone service by 2011/12. Each 211 provider is at a different level of development and provides different levels of service. Regional expansion outward from each local site is dependent on local funding from municipalities, United Ways and other sources.

Consequently, O211SC is focusing on building capacity and consistent practices in service delivery. To do so, requires allocating funds in a fair manner that takes into account local conditions. An important principle is accountability for use of these funds through a business plan and performance measures.



**The eight 211 sites and their executive leads are:**

***Central Region***

Janice Hayes,  
Findhelp Information Services,  
Toronto

***Central East Region***

Pam Hillier,  
Community Connections,  
Simcoe

***Central West Region***

Kate Johnston,  
Regional Municipality of Halton,  
(Information Partner,  
Oakville Public Library)

***Central South Region***

Rosanna Thoms,  
Information Niagara

***Dufferin-Peel Region***

Karla Hale,  
Regional Municipality of Peel,  
(Information Partner,  
CMHA/Peel Branch)

***Eastern Region***

Marie-Andrée Carrière,  
Community Information  
Centre of Ottawa

***Northern Region***

Marie Klassen,  
Lakehead Social Planning Council,  
Thunder Bay

***South West Region***

Jennifer Tanner,  
City of Windsor

## **Success through Partnerships**

Ontario 211 could not exist without the partnership between the eight 211 information and referral sites and the Ontario 211 Services Corporation.

Each 211 operator is responsible to handle all telephone calls in each region and most also collect the information about services and agencies in their area so that the database at [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca) remains current and accurate.

The Executive Directors / Managers of each 211 site meet almost every month to discuss the challenges they face in mounting new services, share information about best practices, and develop a work plan of activities required for consistent standards across all regions. Their advice was critical to the O211SC's strategic planning process, which resulted in the vision, mission and priorities for the provincial system.

Jennifer Tanner, this year's Chair of the Operators Group said "our regular meetings have been important to help the five new 211 sites learn from the experience of the original three. Just as important, the Operators Group provides advice to the 211 Services Corporation. We've also established several task groups to pursue key aspects of 211 system development for province-wide delivery. With this spirit of team work, we will succeed! "

211 has been an extremely successful partnership between the City, the County and the United Way.

We work together in so many ways and on so many projects, both big and small, so a service like this is a perfect fit.

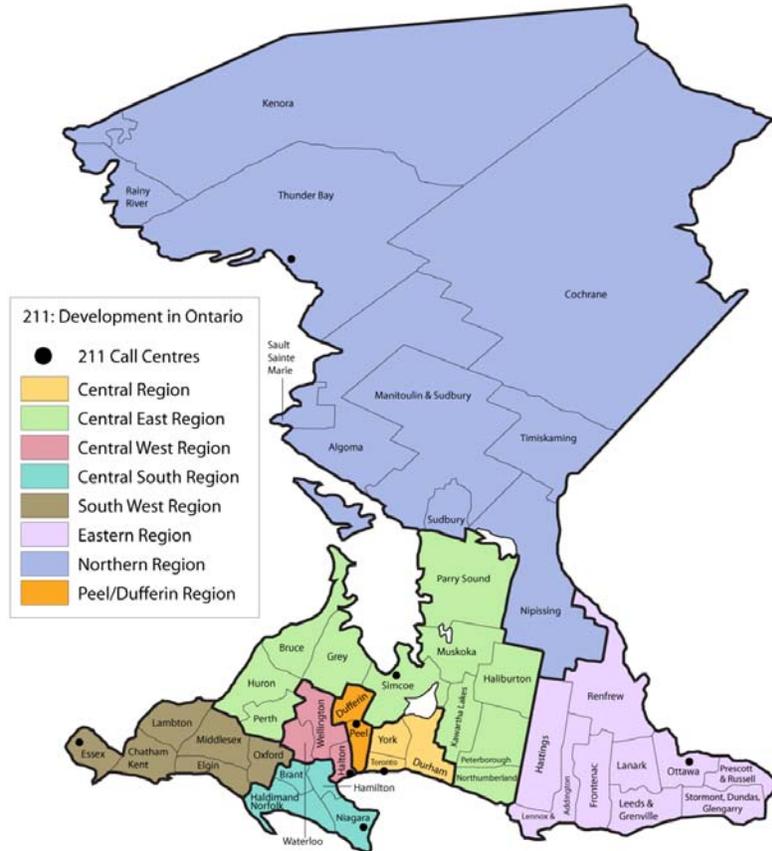
*Warden Nelson Santos,  
County of Essex*

## Map 2: Geographic Areas by 211 Call Centres

### 211: Development in Ontario

“A single point of contact for services is important on a normal day, and residents love the simplicity of it, but in a time of emergency, quick access to a calm, reassuring and informative voice on the other end of the phone can be invaluable.”

*Shawn Boutette, City of Windsor Fire Prevention Officer.*



## **Report from the President**

2008 has been a remarkable year for 211 in Ontario. The 2008 provincial budget set aside more than \$13 million over four years to expand 211's capacity to reach all Ontarians. At the end of the year, 211 was identified by the province as an important component of "Smarter Government" in the provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy. As part of that strategy, the Province committed on-going funding of \$4.0 million per year to sustain 211 for all Ontarians, starting in 2012.

This double boost from the provincial government also sends an important message to 211's community partners, local United Ways and municipal governments, that 211 is here to stay. Together, we can ensure that all residents of Ontario can readily access the community, government and health-related services they need.

The 2008 funding announcements build on the foundation created by earlier provincial investments. In 2006, the province provided the United Ways of Ontario with \$1.4 million to expand the network from 3 sites serving 20% of the population to 8 sites, serving over half of all Ontarians. It also provided \$3 million to develop the data base of 56,000 agencies and services that forms the core of 211's phone and web channels.

The trust shown by the provincial government in Ontario 211 is greatly valued by the Board of Directors. We are working diligently to justify that trust by promoting good governance, sound business practices, and by establishing accountability structures and mechanisms both at the Board level and throughout the 211 system.

This year was also marked by continued expansion. In September, 2008 Ottawa joined the network (see related article). Also during the year, the Central East Region has enabled 211 access for the communities of Muskoka District, Bruce, Northumberland, and Peterborough. Plans are afoot to expand into Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton, and Sault Ste. Marie. Congratulations are due to Pam Hillier, Executive Director, Community Connections, for realizing the promise!

We can be justifiably proud of these accomplishments. At the same time, the environment in which we work is sobering. Hard economic times create additional stress for individuals and families, be it keeping a roof over their heads or food in the fridge. The financial resources of our local United Ways and municipalities available for 211 expansion is restricted. Even if the recession ends in the coming year, we know that unemployment levels will lag any economic recovery. The need is there. We remain determined that 211 will be available to all Ontarians by 2011.

And finally, on behalf of the board of directors, I thank our small professional staff under the able leadership of Bill Morris, Executive Director, who have successfully facilitated the availability of 211 for thousands more Ontarians while beginning to build a governance infrastructure on which to base solid future growth.

John Myers  
President, Board of Directors  
Ontario 211 Services Corporation

## **From the Executive Director**

This is our first Annual Report and I am gratified that we can speak about so many accomplishments. These results are due to the hard work of many in the community information sector, local United Ways, and municipalities. None of this would have been possible without the support of the Hon. Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services. The back room efforts of MCSS staff helped pave the way for a co-operative effort that bodes well for the future.

To support our growing network, we've established a small office for the behind the scenes organization needed to move 211 to the next level. Together with Philip Ferrao, Office Manager, we've worked with the Operators Group and the Board of Directors to chart future directions and next steps.

Findhelp Information Services has been very generous in providing us with office space, for serving as the host for Board and Operator Group meetings. We've been ably assisted by our small team of consultants, who, on occasion, have worked as volunteers to keep the project moving. I want to thank Roger Maloney, Municipal consultant, for his cogent advice on how to approach our municipal partners. Janine Elias Jookema ably facilitated the Board strategic planning sessions and meetings of the Operators Group. Barry McMaster, Financial Consultant, provided insights into how to introduce some fairness into a system with differing financial capacities, while David Priebe, Communications and Policy, has a way with words and provincial government processes. Deborah Woods is mapping out system metrics to ensure service quality.

Lastly, please allow me to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of members of the Board of Directors who have devoted countless volunteer hours of their busy schedules to the 211 cause.

Together we will realize even greater achievements – extending 211 to all residents of Ontario.

Bill Morris  
Executive Director  
Ontario 211 Services Corporation

## **Making a Difference – the Results are In!**

Last year, nearly 500,000 Ontarians called 211. 80% of 211 calls were answered in less than 20 seconds. Nearly 90% of callers followed up on the information and referrals received through 211 and actually got the help or services they need. As a testament to 211's popularity and value to callers, virtually all said they not only would use the service again, but would recommend it to friends and family.

“The most vulnerable members of the community often face the greatest difficulty finding and securing programs and services,” explained Bill Morris, Executive Director of Ontario211 Services Corporation, which oversees the provincial system. “211 helps level the playing field and overcome systemic challenges. Expanding 211 province-wide creates a powerful new tool in Ontario's efforts to reduce poverty.”

Ontario's communities differ widely in demographic composition and economic outlook. 211 helps service providers and planners respond to local pressures by providing current information about who needs what.

Caller data is a key source of information about the concerns facing Ontario families. Calls about health and government services topped the list with all sites reporting, these types of calls in the top 5. This was followed by calls about community services and financial assistance.

One thing that is consistent throughout all regions is that women make up the vast majority of callers. Provincially, about 75% of all calls are made by women. While most calls are made in English, 211 has the capacity to handle 150 different languages.

"This one-stop shopping for services will help seniors needing home-care support, help young mothers worrying about proper care for their newborns and to assist families trying to help their son or daughter with a newly diagnosed illness. What an important tool for everyone in our community ..."

*Jeff Leal, MPP for  
Peterborough*

It brings a sense of security to know that this service is ... up and running 24/7 to offer help and guidance to those in need or assistance in a wide range of uses.

*Councillor Shirley Eggleton,  
City of Peterborough.*

## **Our Callers Comment...**

"I called a lot of places today and no one was able to help me until I called you."

"I've called 4 or 5 times now and not only do I not have trouble remembering your number but I always get what I need from your very helpful staff."

"Great service. I tell everyone about it."

"You guys are just wonderful. I work for Community Services and I refer my clients to you all the time. You guys do such a great job...thank you!"

"I can't get over how much information I got by dialling 211. I wish I had known about you before I started to make the many calls looking for what I needed."

"Great service, but disappointed that not many people know about 211."

"The customer service I received was above and beyond the call of duty. The person that answered the 211 line was kind and had all the information I needed."

"You are fantastic and I am so thankful ... as I could not manage without you and 211."

"This service is wonderful, have used it numerous times, and always guided in the right direction."

"Thank you so much, you've been very kind to me."

**2008 – 2009 Financial Statement**  
**Ontario 211 Services Corporation**

Revenues

	\$
Province of Ontario	<u>1,346,555</u>
<i>Total Revenues</i>	1,346,555

Expenses

Administrative & Office Expenses	45,110
Service Delivery	748,000
Governance and Organizational Development	126,803
Expansion and Planning	121,052
Stabilization	24,608
Mobilization	22,850
System Development	127,845
Service Expansion	24,981
Salaries & benefits	83,923
GST	5,616
Amortization	<u>4,237</u>
<i>Total Expenses</i>	1,335,025

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<i>Net Income and accumulated surplus</i>	<u>11,530</u>
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