



**211 Ottawa  
Untangle Life's Challenges**

**1<sup>st</sup> Year of Service  
Final Report**

**Produced in October 2009  
By the Community Information Centre of Ottawa**

211 Partners/partenaires:



Citizenship and  
Immigration Canada  
Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada

Canada



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1933 - 2008



## 211 Ottawa Background

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### What is 211?

211 is an easy-to-remember, three-digit, non-emergency telephone number that connects callers to a full range of community, social, government and health service information in Ottawa. Bilingual and certified information and referral specialists answer 211 calls 7 days per week. 211 is free, confidential and multilingual (150 languages). The information is also available online at **[www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca)**.

### Benefits of 211 Service

As the communities served by the 211 service throughout North America have discovered, 211 is of tremendous benefit to their citizens. An impact study<sup>1</sup> conducted following the first full year of operation of Toronto's 211 service concluded that 211 ensures that people receive significantly better service when seeking help about community, health and public resources. For example, the study found that:

- People can access community services more quickly and effectively.
- Community and public service organization staff refer clients to 211, knowing that their clients will receive the right information.
- People spend less time, are less frustrated, and become less discouraged in finding and accessing the help that they need.
- People, especially immigrants, who are more comfortable speaking their own language, can be helped through the multilingual capacity of the 211 service.

The study also found that a 211 service encourages people to help themselves. They receive information targeted to their individual needs and 211 callers are better able to prioritize their actions and plan accordingly.

In addition to improving access to, and delivery of, services to individual members of the community, 211 offers significant benefits for governments and service providers. For example:

- As the first point of access, 211 can reduce the cost to governments of operating toll-free 1-800 numbers;
- 211 can also save money on the advertising governments and other service organizations spend to inform citizens about how to access programs and services;
- 211 can significantly reduce the amount of time civil servants and staff in publicly funded agencies currently devote to responding to misdirected or inappropriate calls;
- 211 can help reduce duplication in data collection and improve data management by reducing the need for multiple agencies to collect and maintain databases of services and programs.

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<sup>1</sup> *211 For All Ontario: Bringing People and Services Together – Final Report*, July 2003 available at [www.211.ca](http://www.211.ca)

### **How is 211 different from 311, 411 and 911?**

- 211 – Information and referral service that connects people to the full range of community, social, government and health services programs.
- 311 – Customer service line for the City of Ottawa municipal services such as road repairs, garbage removal or housing services.
- 411 – Telephone directory listings
- 911 – Emergency number for medical, fire and police assistance

### **History of 211 Ottawa**

The first 211 service opened in Atlanta in 1997. Since that time, the 211 concept has spread across North America and new 211 centers continue to open regularly across the continent. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) awarded a license for reserved use of the 211 number to a consortium led by United Way Canada in 2001. The first Canadian 211 service started in Toronto in 2002. Since then, similar services have sprung up across the country and are now found in many major cities. Operating within the terms set by the CRTC, 211 services and trademarks are controlled and licensed by United Way Canada.

Discussions about bringing a 211 service to Ottawa began more than 5 years ago with extensive community consultations, a feasibility study and a review of organizational capacity. In 2005, a comprehensive business and technical plan was developed and in 2006, United Way organizations across Ontario banded together to collectively call upon the Government of Ontario to “make 211 accessible to all residents of Ontario”. The Government responded by providing a \$3 million grant over three years to expand and develop [www.211Ontario.ca](http://www.211Ontario.ca), a bilingual website housing a directory of approximately 60,000 human services available in Ontario. It also earmarked \$1.4 million to draw up a province-wide delivery model and to fund the acquisition of equipment for regional call centres. \$242,000 was set aside for the start up of 211 Ottawa, conditional on local 211 promoters being able to guarantee at least one year of operational funding. The provincial plans envisaged that the Ottawa call centre would eventually grow to serve most of Eastern Ontario and would also become the focal point for French language services across the province through a consolidated network of 211 call centres.

The initial plan for delivering 211 services in Ottawa called for the Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region (DCOR), to take the lead role in planning and delivering the new service. The Community Information Centre of Ottawa (CICO), a long-established Ottawa non-profit agency, was to provide and maintain the database of community agencies and feed information to the provincial website. Operating within this framework, call centre space was leased and equipped by DCOR. The 211 service in Ottawa was initiated on a pilot basis in February 2008 using trained I&R staff contracted from CICO.

In March 2008, the board of directors of DCOR made a decision to withdraw from the 211 project. With the continuing support of United Way/Centraide Ottawa, CICO agreed to take over the lead role in operating 211 Ottawa and moved into the new

call centre space in May 2008. The 211 pilot service has been gradually expanded to provide full coverage throughout the City of Ottawa and increased hours of operation – first from 35 hours/week to 50 hours/week and then to 70 hours /week starting in September 2008. The service was officially launched to the media on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2008.

Between February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008 211 Ottawa received a total of 2034 calls.

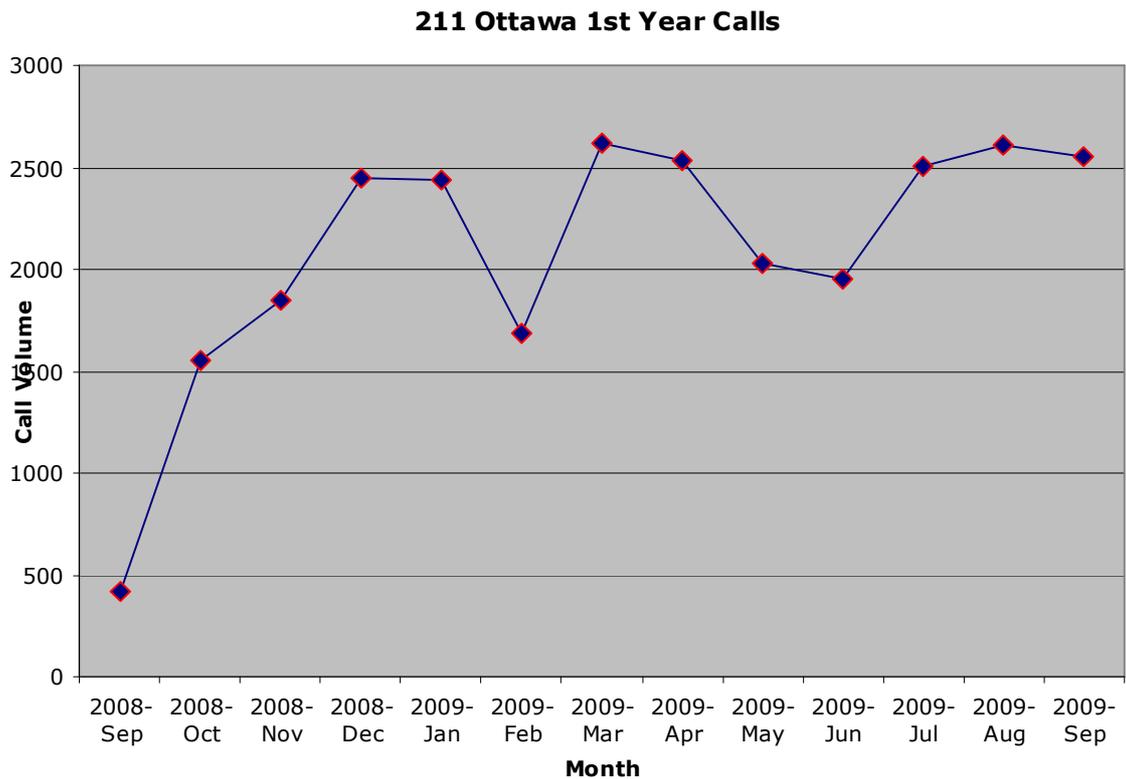
## **Statistics September 2008 to September 2009**

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### **Call Volume**

Since the official launch date, 211 Ottawa has received a total of **20,783** calls.

The chart below illustrates the progressive increase experienced since the official launch.



## Caller Demographics

<b>Gender of Callers (From Caller Survey)</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
Male	25%	31.5%	32%	30%	29.6%
Female	71.5%	68%	67.6%	68%	68.8%
Unknown	3.5%	0.5%	0.4%	2%	1.6%

<b>Age of Callers (From Caller Survey)</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
Child (under 14 years)	0.1%	0.2%	0.17%	0.3%	0.2%
Youth (15-24)	4.2%	4.8%	7.44%	8%	6.1%
Young adult (25-45)	64.3%	50%	45.8%	50%	52.5%
Adult (46-64)	27.5%	35%	39.3%	34.7%	34.1%
Senior (65 and over)	3.9%	10%	7.29%	7%	7.1%

<b>Language of Callers (From Caller Survey)</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
English	88%	85%	85%	85.1%	85.8%
French	11.4%	14%	14%	14.6%	13.5%
Other than English or French	0.7%	1%	1%	0.3%	0.7%

<b>Is the caller a newcomer to Canada? (From Caller Survey)</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
Yes	-	11.43%	11.3%	7%	10%
No	-	78%	82%	84%	81%
Unknown	-	10.57%	6.7%	9%	9%

<b>Location of Caller (From Caller Survey)</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
K1V	-	-	6.8%	4.63%	5.70%
K1N	-	-	7%	6.1%	6.55%
K1R	-	-	4 %	2.56%	3.28%
K2B	-	-	4.14%	3.6%	3.87%
K2P	-	-	3.51%	2.2%	2.86%
K1L	-	-	3.64%	3.39%	3.52%
K1K	-	-	3.9%	4%	3.95%
K1Y	-	-	2.9%	2.73%	2.82%
K1J	-	-	2.76%	1.14%	1.95%
K1C	-	-	3.51%	2.98%	3.25%
K1B	-	-	2.76%	1.33%	2.04%
K2H	-	-	2.5%	1.74%	2.12%
K1Z	-	-	2.64%	2.56%	2.60%
K1G	-	-	2.76%	2.86%	2.81%
K1H	-	-	2.4%	1.9%	2.15%
K1S	-	-	2.14%	1.2%	1.67%
K2G	-	-	2.14%	2.56%	2.35%
K2C	-	-	1.9%	1.8%	1.85%
K1T	-	-	1.6%	2.1%	1.85%
K0A	-	-	1.51%	1.3%	1.40%
K2E	-	-	1.3%	1.2%	1.25%
K4A	-	-	1%	1.5%	1.25%
K2A	-	-	0.9%	1.7%	1.30%
K2J	-	-	0.9%	1.3%	1.10%
K2L	-	-	0.9%	0.83%	0.87%
K1E	-	-	1.1%	0.7%	0.90%
K2M	-	-	0.7%	0.33%	0.52%
K2W	-	-	0.5%	0.21%	0.36%
K1M	-	-	0.5%	0.54%	0.52%
K1A	-	-	0.6%	0.62%	0.60%
K1P	-	-	0.4%	0.5%	0.45%
K1W	-	-	0.25%	0.12%	0.19%
K0B	-	-	0.12%	0%	0.06%
K2K	-	-	0.4%	0.6%	0.50%
K2N	-	-	0.12%	0%	0.06%
K2R	-	-	0.12%	0.17%	0.15%
K2V	-	-	0.12%	0.1%	0.11%
K2D	-	-	0.12%	0%	0.06%
K4M	-	-	0.12%	0.17%	0.15%
K4C	-	-	0.12%	0.04%	0.08%
K4P	-	-	0.12%	0.1%	0.11%
K6H	-	-	0.12%	0%	0.06%
K7S	-	-	0.12%	0%	0.06%
K0E	-	-	0.12%	0%	0.06%
K2S	-	-	-	0.62%	0.30%
K2T	-	-	-	0.25%	0.13%
K4B	-	-	-	0.12%	0.06%
K7C	-	-	-	0.1%	0.05%
Other - Ontario	-	-	0.6%	2%	1.30%
Other – Canada	-	-	2%	1.5%	1.75%
Other – International	-	-	0.5%	0.3%	0.40%
Other – Crisis	-	-	4%	2.1%	3.05%
Other – Client refused to provide information	-	-	17.5%	29.6%	23.60%

<b>How did caller learn about 211?</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
Word of Mouth	46.5%	61%	46%	39.1%	48.2%
Media	4.5%	7.02%	16.3%	13.6%	10.4%
211 Business card/ Fridge magnet /Poster/Brochure	2.6%	1.33%	1.6%	4.1%	2.4%
Professional Referral	5.1%	2.43%	4.2%	5.6%	4.3%
Community Service or Agency	28%	9.06%	16.2%	14.3%	17%
Government	0.7%	0.08%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
311	5.4%	18.28%	4.1%	2.5%	7.6%
411	0.6%	0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.25%
Has called before	-	-	9.2%	17%	6.55%
Other	6.6%	0.8%	1.8%	3.4%	3%

<b>Location of Service Needed</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan – Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr – Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
Central Ottawa	85%	76%	78.6%	74%	78.4%
Gloucester	1.6%	2.6%	3.2%	3%	2.6%
Blackburn Hamlet	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.13%
Bells Corners	0.04%	0.12%	0%	0.04%	0.05%
Vanier	2.8%	4.2%	3.11%	3.2%	3.32%
South Keys	0.2%	1.5%	0%	0%	0.42%
Carleton	0.3%	0.15%	0.03%	0.1%	0.15%
Kanata	1.5%	2.25%	1.8%	1.73%	1.82%
Navan	0.1%	0.1%	0.03%	0.1%	0.08%
Nepean	3.1%	6.2%	6%	7%	5.6%
Orléans	1%	1.7%	2.4%	3.03%	2%
Osgoode	0.09%	0.15%	0.7%	0.1%	0.3%
Richmond	0.3%	0.6%	0.03%	0.5%	0.35%
Rideau	0.5%	0.6%	0.1%	1.4%	0.65%
Rockliffe Park	0.04%	0.2%	0.03%	0.1%	0.09%
Stittsville	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%	0.27%
Barhaven	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%	0.57%
Manotick	0.04%	0.12%	0.1%	1.2%	0.36%
Sandy Hill	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0%	0.2%
Other – Ontario	1.3%	1.4%	1.7%	2.2%	1.65%
Other – Quebec	0.7%	0.5%	1%	0.9%	0.78%
Other – Canada	0.09%	0.06%	0.07%	0.1%	0.08%
Other - International	0.1%	0.15%	0.1%	0.2%	0.14%

<b>Reasons for Calling</b>	<b>Sep – Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul – Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
Addictions	0.3%	0.35%	0.63%	0.9%	0.55%
Basic Needs (Food, Shelter, Clothing)	4.4%	3.27%	2.65%	3.1%	3.35%
Children's Services	0.7%	0.7%	1.42%	1.4%	1.05%
211/CICO related	14.2%	1.10%	3.8%	2.1%	5.3%
Community services (General)	6.5%	15%	15%	18.2%	13.7%
Consumer/Commercial	1.8%	2.4%	3.8%	3.2%	2.8%
Counselling	2%	3.25%	3%	4%	3.1%
Crisis	0.9%	1.1%	1.3%	0.9%	1.05%
Education	1.97	1.5%	2%	3.1%	2%
Employment	0.9%	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%	1.27%
Environment	0.2%	0.1%	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%
Financial Assistance – EI or CPP	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%	0.6%	0.53%
Financial Assistance – ODSP	0.65%	1.06%	1%	0.8%	0.88%
Financial Assistance – OW	1%	1.16%	0.8%	1.2%	1.04%
Financial Assistance – Other	2.9%	4.1%	2.7%	3.7%	3.35%
Government	5.6%	7.5%	19%	19.5%	12.9%
Health	6%	5.6%	7.4%	8.2%	6.8%
Home Support	1.7%	1%	1.3%	1.4%	1.35%
Housing	4.1%	3.1%	3%	3.8%	3.5%
Immigration/Citizenship	1.8%	1.78%	2.7%	2%	2.07%
Legal	1.9%	2%	3.2%	3.7%	2.7%
Mental Health	1.8%	1%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%
Recreation	1.3%	2%	2.5%	3.2%	2.25%
Transportation	1.9%	20%	2.8%	2.8%	6.88%
Violence/Abuse	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.38%
Volunteerism	2.7%	2.2%	1.8%	1.9%	2.2%
Seasonal Support	32.4%	17%	9.7%	1.4%	15%
Services for Seniors	-	-	1.9%	2.3%	1%
Youth Services	-	-	0.5%	1%	0.4%
Disability Resources	-	-	1.3%	1.5%	0.7%

<b>Information v. Information and Referral</b>	<b>Sep - Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan - Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr - Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul - Sep 2009</b>	<b>Yearly Average</b>
Information	25.2%	30%	20%	18.3%	23.4%
Information and Referral	74.8%	70%	80%	81.7%	76.6%

<b>Advocacy and Endangerment</b>	<b>Sep-Dec 2008</b>	<b>Jan - Mar 2009</b>	<b>Apr - Jun 2009</b>	<b>Jul - Sep 2009</b>	<b>Oct - Dec 2009</b>
Advocacy	0.3%	1%	3.4%	1.4%	1.52%
Endangerment	0.6%	0.25%	0%	0.07%	0.23%

- **Busy Hours and After Hours Calls**

Listed below are the busiest times of day based on incoming calls to our ACD system from our launch date in September 2008 to the end of our first year in September 2009. As early as October 2008, a trend began to emerge that showed incoming calls on our ACD system outside of our regular hours of service, which, during this period were 8:00am to 6:00pm but extended to 7:00am-9:00pm, Mon-Fri and 8:00am-6:00pm Sat-Sun in August 2009. At the end of our first year of operations in September 2009, we had received more than 10,000 calls after hours. Since extending our hours of operation in August 2009, we have continued to receive over 500 after hour calls per month.

- September 2008: 11:30am – 12:30pm
- October 2008: 11:00am - 12:00pm
- November 2008: 11:30am - 12:30pm
- December 2008: 11:00am - 12:00pm
- January 2009: 2:00pm – 3:00pm
- February 2009: 9:00am – 10:30am
- March 2009: 9:00am – 10:00am
- April 2009: 11:00am – 12:00pm
- May 2009: 10:00am – 11:00am
- June 2009: 11:00am – 12:00pm
- July 2009: 10:00am – 11:00am
- August 2009: 11:00am – 12:00pm
- September 2009: 10:00am – 11:00am

Date	211 Calls	Phantom Calls	TOTAL	Average Abandon Time	Call Answer Rate	Target	Average Answer Time	Target	Average ACD Time	Target	Average Queue Time
<b>Totals for Sep 2008 – Sept 2009</b>	<b>20,783</b>	<b>6,403</b>	<b>27,168</b>	<b>:11</b>	<b>88.3%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>:07</b>	<b>:45</b>	<b>2:15</b>	<b>2:30</b>	<b>1:06</b>
September	415	---	415	:16	85%	85%	:06	:45	2:01	2:30	1:01
October	1076	473	1549	:05	88.8%	85%	:04	:45	1:51	2:30	1:05
November	1358	491	1849	:12	87%	85%	:08	:45	1:57	2:30	:59
December	1939	504	2443	:19	88%	85%	:10	:45	2:14	2:30	1:12
January	2166	276	2442	:24	89%	85%	:14	:45	2:57	2:30	1:30
February	1361	327	1688	:09	87.6%	85%	:07	:45	2:17	2:30	1:04
March	2121	497	2618	:13	89.6%	85%	:08	:45	2:42	2:30	1:05
April	1948	589	2537	:12	90.32%	85%	:06	:45	2:33	2:30	1:04
May	1504	521	2025	:08	90.29%	85%	:05	:45	2:29	2:30	1:01
June	1527	421	1948	:06	90.88%	85%	:05	:45	2:33	2:30	1:06
July	1689	815	2504	:04	88.39%	85%	:05	:45	1:51	2:30	1:02
August	1782	829	2611	:07	85.61%	85%	:06	:45	1:51	2:30	1:07
September	1897	660	2557	:14	87.54%	85%	:06	:45	2:01	2:30	1:12

\*\*\*Phantom Calls are electromagnetic pulses which travel through phone lines. Three digit numbers are susceptible to receive these calls. It is important to count these calls because they are actually answered although there is no inquiry at the other end of the line.

## **Key Activities September 2008 to December 2008**

### **Public Awareness**

We have aggressively pursued this initiative by using three channels of communication.

#### ***Collateral distribution with introduction letters:***

We ensured the distribution of packages, containing our pamphlets, posters, business cards and magnets, to over 340 organizations that support various clienteles and who have the capacity to distribute these collaterals to their clients. Our collaterals are currently in high demand by those wanting to refer their clients to 211. They have proved to be user friendly and effective in communicating the purpose and message of 211.

#### ***Reaching out to community organizations and coalitions and partnership building:***

During our first quarter of service, we presented to 21 community organizations and coalitions. Furthermore, there were 17 community organizations that visited our office to present their services to our staff and to discover how 211 can help them support their clients. We also sent letters to numerous active coalitions, newcomer and immigrant serving organizations and Aboriginal serving organizations in Ottawa to present 211 and to build relationships with those groups. In addition, we established call guidelines with 911, 311, and Employment and Financial Assistance and are currently in the process of finalizing the guidelines with Ottawa Public Health, Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region and Volunteer Ottawa.

Toy Mountain and Christmas Exchange joined together in 2008 in order to develop a centralized approach regarding registration for toys and food during the holidays. They referred all applicants to 211, which served as the central point of contact for locating the accurate registration centre for toys and for Christmas vouchers. They made public announcements on television and in newspapers to publicize our involvement. Furthermore, the Ottawa Food bank has shared their referral tool with us which allows us to respond to more food related calls and also serves as an invitation for the public to contact us.

At the end of our first quarter of service the Ottawa Transit System went on strike. This event had a serious affect on Ottawa's vulnerable populations and the agencies who serve them. 211 partnered with Volunteer Ottawa and United Way/Centraide Ottawa to place an urgent call for volunteer drivers. We implemented a system to maintain the list of volunteers and organizations needing volunteers through the volunteer management database of Volunteer Ottawa and are continuing to manage the caller inquiries.

#### ***Interviews and updated website:***

We updated our website to have a more modernized look and to reveal 211 in a more prominent way. We have also included the 211 logo on our Community Information Bulletin. The website was launched in January 2009.

During this period we appeared on television and in several newspaper articles and we have been contributing to local newspapers and student radio stations to promote the 211 service.

## **Key Activities January 2009 to March 2009**

### **Communications, Community Liaison and Public Awareness**

All 211 communications activities will follow the 2009 - 2010 Communications Strategy. A 211 Communications and Liaison Officer has been hired and will be responsible for increasing the visibility of 211 among the general public and community organizations.

#### ***211 Community Presentations***

Community presentations contributed significantly towards increasing the visibility of 211. Presentations allowed us to reach a large number of individuals and to provide answers to any questions that they might have about the service. Also, presentations provided us with the opportunity to create partnerships with professional attendees and to address any concerns in a positive manner.

The 211 team made 18 presentations to various community members and professionals between the months of January and March 2009. We estimate that approximately 1000 people attended 211 presentations during this quarter. Nine of the presentations were made to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. This was an important and vulnerable population to reach because many new immigrants and individuals learning the language are often unaware of the plethora of services available to them. Additionally, these individuals often face language barriers when accessing services; therefore, it is important that they know that 211 is a multilingual service. 211 was provided with a booth at 3 Community / Agency fairs and presented the service at the VHA Community Health Summit Breakfast on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009. 211 was represented at the Stroke Survivors Walk and Roll fundraising event at the Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre on March 28<sup>th</sup>. We were invited to make a presentation about 211 to the participants and mall patrons. We were also given a booth to showcase our 211 collaterals and to talk with community members. Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien was present at this event and supported the work of 211 in the community. Furthermore, representatives from ODSP and Katimavik visited our office to present their programs and services to our staff and to discover how 211 can help them support their clients.

#### ***Advertising and Media***

Print and internet advertisements were run in three different Ottawa area newspapers.

211 bus ads were created and featured on 500 OC Transpo buses from February – December 2009.

Two press releases were sent out to media outlets to increase the awareness about 211. The first press release described our 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of operation and was picked up by the Ottawa Sun and numerous radio stations. A second press release announced the free income tax clinics list and invited individuals to call 211 to find their closest location and times.

We created radio advertisements to announce the presence of 211 and to inform the public on how to use the 211 service. The radio ads began to run during our 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of operation, on April 20<sup>th</sup>. Radio advertisements proved to be an efficient method of public awareness and had benefited many other not-for-profit organizations.

***Collateral distribution with introduction letters:***

We have continued to distribute packages containing our pamphlets, posters, business cards and magnets to organizations that support various clientele and who have the capacity to distribute these collaterals to their clients. Our collaterals are currently in high demand by those wanting to refer their clients to 211. They have proved to be user friendly and effective in communicating the purpose and message of 211. We sent packages to over 80 walk-in medical clinics, emergency rooms, sexual health clinics and other high volume service areas.

***Reaching out to community organizations and coalitions and partnership building:***

A partnership was created with the Ottawa Police Services to coordinate the dissemination of knowledge about 211 among officers who could then pass their knowledge on to community members. 2000 pamphlets were distributed to all the Ottawa Police officers along with their paystubs. Each of the 2000 officers was also given referral cards to give out when working in the community. 211 posters were distributed to the 22 Ottawa area police stations.

The Stroke Survivors Association of Ottawa generously gave 211 1/3 of a page of advertising space in their monthly newsletter. They also sent out a summary of 211 to all of their board members.

A 211 website banner was created and was emailed to multiple organizations to be placed on their websites. The banner was emailed to all community health and resource centres, the community houses, Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, La Cité Collegiale, Algonquin College and the Ottawa Food Bank. We will continue to send the banner to other organizations with the goal of increasing the presence of 211 on the web.

**The Transit Strike and 211**

The 211 service in Ottawa saw its clients significantly affected by the Transit strike which was in effect from December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009. A considerable amount of our calls during this period were related to the strike. There were often no simple answers to the requests we received and they frequently required a case by case assessment of the individual's circumstances in order to locate a service the person would be eligible for.

### ***How we got involved***

In December, many of the calls we received were related to people's difficulty in picking up their toys from Toy Mountain and the impact it was having on Christmas Exchange. We worked closely with those agencies to meet the needs of the clients and measures were put in place to allow the distribution of the holiday supports.

During this time we also collaborated with Volunteer Ottawa and United Way/Centraide Ottawa in facilitating the volunteer matching to organizations needing volunteers. In the week between Christmas and New Year's calls were noticeably lower than previous weeks.

In January 2009, we began working more closely with 311 and we were able to negotiate which calls were to be handled by which service. Following the announcement that the Transit Union voted against the offer of the City, the calls increased dramatically. Additionally, the City of Ottawa offered some concrete measures to support the residents who were being affected the most. From that point onwards, we participated in daily teleconferences with the City of Ottawa, 311 and the 14 Community Health and Resource Centres in the city. This was pivotal for the 211 service because it ensured that we were receiving the right information to better serve our clients.

A press release was prepared in December 2008 and received some media coverage by the Ottawa Sun and a Letter to the Editor was published in the Ottawa Citizen in January 2009.

## **Key Activities April 2009 to September 2009**

### ***211 Community Presentations***

Community presentations were a key focus of these two quarters. Traditionally, many not-for-profit agencies and organizations experience a decreased amount of requests for service during the summer months. Based on this knowledge, we actively worked to increase public awareness through multiple avenues.

Focusing on seniors was a vital aspect of the communications strategy this quarter. Presentations were made at 21 retirement residences and 5 events geared towards seniors (Revera Seniors Picnic, Age Well Active Living Expo, Boomers and Beyond, Seniors Advisory Council and the Forum Francophone).

Additionally, Information booths were set up for 18 days at major malls and recreation complexes. This opportunity allowed members of the community to receive pamphlets and to pose questions to a 211 representative at the booth. Additionally, being located in a busy area provides exposure even to those who do not stop to inquire about 211. Information booths were also present at 11 community events including the Navan Fair, Capital Pride Info Fair and the United Way's Annual Sharing our Strengths Conference.

Presentations were made to 15 professional groups working with the human services system. Key mentions among these presentations were those made to the Ottawa

Police, the Seniors Advisory Council, the Community House Coalition and several of the Community Health and Resource Centers.

### ***Advertising and Media***

A 211 Ottawa fan page was created on the social networking site Facebook. The purpose of this page was to increase public awareness about the service and also to create a public forum for posting information and updates. Media releases, the date of our AGM and information about our extended hours are all examples of information that was shared using our Facebook page. We are presently looking into the possibility of providing Information and Referral via Facebook in the goal of reaching people in a manner that is most convenient to them.

211 Ottawa created a Twitter account to inform the public about important changes and updates and to share news about 211. This initiative also allows us to stay current with updates and events posted by other community organizations and funders.

During this quarter, we were invited to co-host a local morning show on the CKCU 93.1 radio station. We talked extensively about 211 and created awareness about the benefits of 211 in our community. We ran a successful radio campaign from April 20 – May 1, 2009. We accomplished this by working with a local communications company to create 4 unique 15-second ads that ran 300 times on 5 popular radio stations. The radio stations were chosen based on a target demographic, they were: CFRA, KISS FM, Y101, Majic 100 and Rock Détente.

The Cisco Ottawa Bluesfest is a major annual music festival in Ottawa. 211 Ottawa received advertisement space in the 2009 program which was distributed at major hotels, tourist attractions and at the festival.

211 pamphlets and posters were mailed to approximately 900 physicians. This initiative had two main purposes: to educate physicians so that they could use 211 as a referral source for their clients and to have pamphlets and posters available in waiting areas for patients to read.

Four press releases were sent out during this quarter to major newspapers and community based newspapers. The first was an invitation to our AGM in June 2009. The second was a general information piece about 211 and reflected key aspects such as how we overcome barriers to access and guarantee a live answer. The third press release announced our extended hours and the last celebrated our 1 year anniversary.

### ***Reaching out to community organizations and coalitions and partnership building:***

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa is currently working on developing a community lead GIS mapping initiative. Due to the wealth of the data collected by 211, we are positioning the relationship in order to increase awareness of 211 and promoting the value of GIS Mapping for research and planning purposes in our community. This relationship is tied to a larger provincial initiative of GIS mapping in Ontario.

Ottawa Public Health has been producing a food related Directory known as the Food Link for a few years. In 2009, 211 and the Food Link are partnering together in order to avoid duplicating of services. We are currently in the process of transferring missing data from the Food Link to the 211 Ottawa database and will be encouraging to call 211 for food related inquiries.

For the second year in a row, 211 is partnering with Toy Mountain and Christmas Exchange, in order to be the central point of contact for registration and donation related calls during the holiday season.

211 shares data pertaining to calls received with various groups in order to support their requests for funding or to have the data to feel the pulse of their neighborhood and/or community.

Ottawa Youth Justice Services Network, is developing a relationship with 211 to support their data needs all the while increasing awareness of 211

The Répertoire des services en français was produced in 2008-2009 and is aligned towards directing calls related to French services in the city to 211. The promotion of this service has continued in 2009-2010.

## Caller Satisfaction

Client Satisfaction (From Caller Survey)	Sep – Dec 2008	Jan – Mar 2009	Apr – Jun 2009	Jul – Sep 2009	Yearly Averages
Percentage of first-time callers	80%	88%	82%	70%	80%
Percentage of previous callers	20%	12%	18%	30%	20%
Politeness of the counsellor? (average mark out of 10)	8	9.6	9.6	9.7	9.2
How professional was the counsellor? (average out of 10)	7.2	9	9.5	9	8.7
How well did the counsellor listen? (average out of 10)	7.5	9	9	9.3	8.7
Did caller understand the options given? (Yes/No)	96% Yes	100% Yes	91% Yes	100% Yes	97%
Did caller follow up on referral provided?	95% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	99%

Would caller use 211 again?	96%	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	99%
Would caller recommend 211 to others?	100%	100% Yes	100% Yes	100% Yes	100%
Overall how satisfied are you with the 211 service? (Unsatisfied/Satisfied/Very Satisfied/Exceeded Expectations)	84% Very Satisfied or Exceeded Expectations	100% Very Satisfied or Exceeded Expectations	91% Very Satisfied or Exceeded Expectations	90% Very Satisfied or Exceeded Expectations	91% Very Satisfied or Exceeded Expectations

- **Gaps in Service**

From January to September 2009 a total of 116 gaps in service were recorded. The most common gap in service was a lack of free income tax clinics for individuals/families with a low income in Ottawa and area, specifically for those living in Kanata. Secondly is the accessibility of food bank centres and some specialized health supports in specific areas of the city, such as low cost dental care, prenatal yoga and hospital emergency services. Other service gaps included low cost transportation services; government services, such as departmental information lines; housing assistance in some areas of the city; counseling; including francophone support groups; food bank delivery services and recycling of electronic materials.

## **Success Stories**

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- A client called 211 looking for information on treatment programs that could help his wife who has a debilitating phobia. He had been searching online and was unable to find any useful programs or resources. He informed me that the cost of treatment is not a concern. After doing some research for the client, I was able to refer him to a centre which specializes in the treatment of phobias through hypnosis and to an occupational therapist that works in a downtown health care organization and offers individual therapy to treat such fears as aerophobia. I also contacted an agency offering a variety of counseling services for anxiety and which uses a behavioral approach, commonly used to treat phobias, and was able to refer the client to this agency, who informed me that they could offer this type of counseling.
- We received a call from a newcomer who had been in Canada for almost a year and was experiencing a crisis. He was struggling financially, was unable to find employment and was having trouble getting settled in Canada. He turned to 211 in order to find counseling services, as well as employment and financial assistance. He was also hoping to find agencies that worked with newcomers and immigrants, in order for him to consult a settlement specialist and build relationships with other newcomers who are living similar challenges to break his isolation. Crisis intervention techniques were used during the call and the client was referred to agencies that can help him with

settlement, employment and financial help, while taking into account eligibility. Out of the agencies he was referred to, some included organizations offering a variety of social services for immigrants and refugees, employment programs specifically for newcomers and a community resource centre nearby that offers counseling services. I was able to help the client by linking him with social organizations that could meet his needs and I was able to defuse the client's immediate emotional situation. Together, we were able to identify which needs first needed to be filled and we were able to make an action plan.

- We received a call from a mother whose infant was just diagnosed with a serious allergy. In order for her baby to receive the proper nutritional supplements, the mother was told by nutritionists that she would need to give him a specific nutritional supplement formula. The cost of the formula was much too high for the family and even though the mother was able to find a better price estimate, it was still beyond the price range they could afford. Out of concern for her child's well being and development, she turned to 211 for advice and support. After doing some research, I was able to link the client with two different financial assistance programs which help individuals and parents cover some of the extra costs associated to such diagnoses, as well as a charity which assists children when no other source of funding is available to cover the costs associated to essential necessities. I was also able to provide the client with information on a support group for individuals and families affected by particular types of allergies, based in Ottawa, as well as an organization which works to promote healthy living for those living with allergies and also promotes awareness and works on community initiatives. The caller started searching on their website right away, and thanked me for my efforts in finding programs that can assist her and her family.
- A senior called and informed an information and referral counsellor that his basement apartment was infested with bugs. He needed a place to stay for a few days while his apartment was fumigated. He wanted to find a place to go to as soon as possible. The counsellor informed the senior about the emergency shelter services offered through the City of Ottawa - Employment and Financial Assistance branch. He was informed that they may be able to find a placement for him at a hotel or at a shelter. The client was anxious and explained to the counsellor how stressful this situation was for him. The counsellor offered to call the City on his behalf and asked for his permission to provide his name and number and to explain his situation to the operator. The caller gave permission to disclose this information and said to the counsellor that he felt relieved knowing that the counsellor would make the call for him. After contacting the city and speaking to an operator, the counsellor contacted the senior and explained to him that an operator from the City would be giving him a call in five minutes in order to ask him a few questions on his financial situation and to find him an appropriate placement for those two to three days. The caller informed the counsellor that he was impressed with how quickly they were planning to contact him and thanked the counsellor for her help.
- We received a call from a man who had recently broken some bones and was off work and not yet receiving Employment Insurance. He had two primary concerns: he needed to see a doctor and he needed food. He was unable to walk to his regional food bank because of the medication he was taking. To

further complicate matters, OC Transpo was on strike and he did not have any other means of transportation. We contacted the main food bank to inquire about delivery services in emergency situations. It was suggested that the caller call the regional food bank to see if they had any volunteer drivers available to deliver the food. We also invited him to explore the possibilities of receiving assistance from a meals-on-wheels program, since he was going to be out of commission for quite some time due to his injury. The next pressing matter was that he needed to see a doctor because of the pain he was experiencing. We located a home visiting medical service which offers referrals to private independent doctors who can offer non-emergency medical house calls. The caller was amazed that this type of service existed and was extremely grateful for our assistance. He said he will definitely call 211 again!

- We received a call from a parent whose child was currently at an area hospital and the child, accompanied by a family member. The child and the family member at the hospital were ready to come home and needed transportation. The parent did not have the means to pay for a taxi and there were no friends or family members that could help. We contacted 3-1-1, the after hours line for the Employment and Financial Assistance branch of the City of Ottawa, to see if anything could be done for the client who was an Ontario Works recipient. With the caller's permission, we provided the worker with the client's name and phone number. The worker informed us that in this type of situation they could definitely provide a taxi free of charge for the client and they informed me that they would contact her right away. The family was able to make it home safely.
- A woman called us regarding child custody. The mother currently had custody of the child but was concerned that the father intended to abduct the child and return to his native country. The caller did not know how to deal with this complex situation and wanted to know if there was an organization that could help her daughter prevent an international child abduction. We searched for possible organizations that could assist people finding themselves in this type of difficult situation and found a program that specifically deals with international child abductions and that provides information and resources that can help prevent it. The mother was very thankful for our assistance stated that she did not know how she would have found out about this service without 211.
- Over the holidays, a man called to ask for our assistance. He wanted to go see his family for Christmas but he could not take his pet with him on a long distance bus trip. He said he had tried everything he could to find assistance but to no avail. After taking down some information on his situation we told him that we would call him back to let him know if there were any services that may offer him assistance. We then started looking at different services that offered pet transportation in Ottawa. Sadly, no long-distance pet transportation was available within his price range. We started calling organizations that offered local pet transportation to see if they could make an exception and offer a long distance service. One of the organizations had somebody who was able to help the caller and his dog get home for Christmas Eve. We called the man and referred him to the service, which was well in his price range. He was extremely grateful for our research and said that he and his pet would have a Merry Christmas.

*Disclaimer: The above success stories reflect the true nature of calls received by 211 Ottawa. Identifying details have been altered and/or omitted to protect the privacy of our callers and to ensure that our confidentiality agreement is not breached by any means. Details regarding referrals to specific organizations are not present because 211 does not want to convey a preference and wishes to remain a non-partial and egalitarian information and referral service.*

## **211 Ottawa and its relationship with other 211 Centres**

### **Ontario 211 Services Corporation and the eight 211 operators in Ontario**

We have worked closely with the eight 211 operators and the Ontario 211 services Corporation in order to assist in establishing a strategic plan to build a consolidated 211 system in Ontario by 2012. The group meets approximately every 4 to 6 weeks in order to discuss and plan important aspects of the 211 service delivery system and to implement these locally.

Other opportunities being explored by this group includes 211 to give and get help, 211 in emergency and disaster related incidents, expansion into eight regional areas, and other relationships pertaining to supporting other specialized service lines and data needs.

Finally, we have developed important relationships amongst this group to support 211 Ottawa in becoming the Centre for francophone excellence and as the second 24/7 redundancy hub. In 2010, important steps shall be taken to support the implementation of these critical pieces which will support the development of a consolidated 211 system.

### **Franco 211**

This is a partnership between 5 of the 211 service providers which aims to improve the access of services offered in French across Ontario. This is a two year project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and 211 Ottawa is a lead partner due to its francophone expertise and bilingual capacity. We are working closely together, particularly with 211 Niagara and 211 Central West to help them translate and manage the quality of their French database.

### **Eastern Ontario Expansion**

During the summer of 2008, we began developing partnerships among our Eastern Ontario Data Partners and potential funders in order to expand the service to this region by 2011. In the past year we have developed an implementation planning committee, terms of reference of the committee and

preliminary budgets and implementation plan. This work will be actively pursued in 2009 and 2010.

### **211 Ottawa and 211 Quebec City**

Since June 2009, 211 Ottawa answers evening and weekend calls from 211 Quebec City. This is the first demonstration of a very exciting opportunity which exists within our sector, having the ability to support one another even across provinces. This is an important step in demonstrating significant national value of the 211 service.

### **AIRS Accreditation**

In the past year we have developed various tools such as our strategic and operational plan and the Policy and Accreditation framework to move forward the work needed to successfully pass the AIRS accreditation. The Implementation of these tools has begun and we are currently reviewing all of our policies and procedures including those related to service delivery and governance. There are many stages to the accreditation process which will officially begin in December 2009. The Accreditation Process shall be completed by mid 2011.

### **Supporting developing 211 services across Canada**

In the past year we have supported emerging 211 centres in Montreal and British Columbia in setting up their 211 service. Furthermore, we are now part of the 211 National Network which will work towards advancing 211 services nationally.

## **Funding**

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### **We are very thankful for the financial support provided by**

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City of Ottawa, Divisions des services en français

## **211 Ottawa Team**

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