



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Committee of the Whole

FROM: Ken Doherty, Director of Community Services

MEETING DATE: January 12, 2009

SUBJECT: Report CSSS09-001
Community Information and Referral Services - 211

PURPOSE

A report to seek Council's support for the United Way's proposed Community Information and Referral Services (phone service number 211).

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council approve the recommendation outlined in Report CSSS09-001 dated January 12, 2009, of the Director of Community Services, as follows:

That the United Way's proposed implementation of 211 as the Community Information and Referral Service be endorsed, provided there is no cost to the City from 2009 to 2012.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Local start-up costs of 211 are covered by the province of Ontario. Long term funding support will also be considered by the province. If ongoing provincial funding is not available, costs would need to be considered and equally shared between the City and County of Peterborough and United Way.

BACKGROUND

211 is an easy-to-remember phone number that connects people to a range of non-emergency social, health, community and government services. By calling 211, an individual would immediately reach an information specialist trained to assess their needs, to understand their questions and concerns and to link them to the best available information and services, all on a confidential, multilingual basis.

In 1997, under the leadership of United Way, Atlanta Georgia became the first community to introduce a 211 service. In 2001, United Way – Centraide Canada and its national partner, Inform Canada, together with local Toronto partners secured the 3-digit number 211 from CRTC as the universal number to help Canadians get better access to information on community services.

In early 2006, United Way organizations across Ontario collectively called on the Government of Ontario to make “211 accessible to all residents of Ontario”. The Ontario government provided a 3 million dollar grant for over three years to Findhelp Information Services, in Toronto, to expand the online service delivery of 211Ontario.ca an internet based directory of 60,000 human services available in Ontario. Start-up costs for sites are also being provided.

The Executive Director of the United Way of Peterborough met with City staff to explain and provide an update concerning 211. There is already a three-way partnership between the City and County and United Way for the provision of information services. Based on this partnership the United Way is asking that the City and County continue to partner and endorse 211 for local residents.

There are currently eight 211 providers in Ontario. Peterborough would be linked through a Collingwood service provider, which is responsible for central east Ontario. Should Peterborough wish to participate in 211, there is a provincial requirement for a municipal resolution indicating endorsement. The endorsement needs to be provided to United Way for January 2009. The endorsement will meet CRTC requirements, which will result in the telecom providers to complete the switching to activate 211 within the region. CRTC rulings require the telecom provider to cover the switching costs.

Peterborough, Northumberland County and City of Kawartha Lakes are scheduled to go 211 live in the spring of 2009. The province will be covering the start-up costs and two years of service.

United way has the lead for the project for Peterborough. The City and County have not been asked for a financial commitment and United Way has also made no financial commitment at this time. Following the two year pilot of 211, statistical information related to the local need and use of this service will be available and can inform any future recommendations pertaining to ongoing financial support of a 211 service in Peterborough. County Council has formally endorsed this proposal.

When this was originally proposed by the United Way to the City and County in 2004, the anticipated annual cost to local municipalities was approximately \$120,000. More recent discussions anticipated a substantial decrease in operating costs to approximately \$20,000 per year. The two-year provincial pilot will provide firmer numbers for future consideration. This should not be considered a new service but rather a refinement of the existing provision of social services information through www.fourinfo.com.

Submitted by,

Ken Doherty
Director of Community Services

Linda Mitchelson
Social Services Division Head

Contact Name:
Joyce Hawthorne
Manager of Community Partnerships and Family Services
Phone – 748-8830 Ext. 3495
Fax – 748-8858
E-Mail – jhawthorne@peterborough.ca