



## Media Release

### **Dial 2-1-1: 24/7 helpline connects people to services. 211 launches in Perth and Huron Counties.**

**June 9, 2010 – Stratford** - 211 is a new 24/7 helpline expanding across Ontario. On Wednesday, June 9, 2010, 211 services officially launched for both Perth and Huron County residents. 211 services are available through two access points, a three-digit phone number, 2-1-1 and its website, [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca). Both the phone and website connect people to organizations that can help them with a multitude of challenges that could range from finding employment services, utility and rent assistance, recreation programs, to accessing food programs. 211 is free to call, confidential, and multilingual.

“We know that the easy accessibility of 211 helping someone find financial assistance for a utility cut off notice, or even an after school program, can change their lives for the better” said Ellen Balmain, Executive Director of United Way of Perth-Huron.

“This Ontario 211 Services Corporation’s expansion into Perth and Huron Counties will give more Ontarians instant telephone access to local social services information. This service will benefit all Ontarians, especially families in crisis who need to access community services, new Canadians who need information to adapt to a new home, or parents searching for local services for their children.” said Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur.

Bringing 211 services to Perth and Huron Counties was made possible in part with a \$59,200 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), an agency of the Government of Ontario. Funding from OTF was used towards the building a comprehensive database of the hundreds of human and community services in Perth and Huron Counties. The database is used by 211 staff to make referrals and is also available on [211Ontario.ca](http://211Ontario.ca) for the public.

MPP John Wilkinson and MPP Carol Mitchell both sent greetings and support of the 211 launch. Guest speakers at the event included Wendy Anderson (Chair of the Perth County Information Network), Pam Hillier (Executive Director of Community Connection) and Bill Morris (Executive Director of 211 Ontario Services Corp).

“I commend the United Way for their great work in setting up the new 211 service in our community,” stated John Wilkinson, MPP, Perth-Wellington. “The 211 initiative will be a much needed life-line for people seeking social, health and government assistance.”

“The single window of access to local non emergency services provided by 211 will be an invaluable resource to my constituents. Congratulations to the United Way of Perth-Huron on the launch of 211 in Perth and Huron Counties. Carol Mitchell, MPP, Huron-Bruce.

“Our Information and Referral Specialists help people who aren’t sure who to call or who are frustrated by complicated phone systems or out of information,” said Pam Hillier. “211 is the number to call when you don’t know who to call.”

The Ontario government has committed more than \$13 million over four years for the Ontario 211 Services Corporation to expand the 211 hotline province-wide by 2011-12 with the help of community partners such as the United Way. From 2012 onward, as announced in the December 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy Report, the government will provide \$4 million annually to maintain the 211 service.

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**Media Contacts:**

**Megan Whittaker, Administrative Coordinator**

United Way of Perth-Huron  
32 Erie Street, Stratford, ON N5A 2M4  
Tel: (519) 271-7730 ext. 225  
Email: [info@unitedwayperthhuron.ca](mailto:info@unitedwayperthhuron.ca)

**Pamela Hillier, Executive Director**

Community Connection/211 Central East Ontario  
275 First Street, Collingwood, ON L9Y 4E8  
Tel: (705) 444-0040 ext. 234  
Email: [phillier@communityconnection.net](mailto:phillier@communityconnection.net)