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DATE: March 9, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **211 EXPANSION FEASIBILITY STUDY**

FROM: R. Kent Gillespie, Commissioner of Employee and Business Services

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Region of Peel, as a 211 service provider, plan for and implement the provision of 211 service to those parts of Caledon that are currently without service and to the County of Dufferin, provided that appropriate funding with respect to the provision of service to Dufferin County is provided through funding partners including Ontario 211 Services Corporation;**

**And further that appropriate agreements with respect to the funding and the provision of 211 services to Caledon and the County of Dufferin be executed by the Region's signing officers.**

### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- 211 Information and Referral Service was implemented in Peel in May 2008 and is provided by the Region through its Customer Contact Centre.
- 211 is intended to be a Province wide system provided by eight centres, of which Peel is one.
- Provincial funding for the development and expansion of the 211 system has been allocated and is administered by Ontario 211 Services Corporation
- Peel received \$30,000 in March 2010 for growth of the 211 services in Peel.
- Funding of \$20,000 has been offered for a Feasibility Study for planning and coordination of 211 Peel services into the County of Dufferin.
- Expansion into the County of Dufferin will allow the remaining 1600 Caledon residents to have access to 211 dialing.

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## DISCUSSION

### 1. Background

211 is an integrated telephone and internet-based system providing callers with one-stop information and referrals to local community, social, health and government programs and services. Trained staff answers 211 calls, assess the needs of each caller and link them to the best available information and/or services. It is a central access point of information which connects individuals to vital resources in their community. Underpinning the 211 service is a comprehensive, professionally maintained database of Peel services and programs.

In May 2008, utilizing the infrastructure of the Customer Contact Center, 211 Information and Referral Services was made available 24 hours, 7 days a week, with over 23,000 calls received in 2009 throughout the Region of Peel.

However, there are approximately 1600 Caledon residents that currently do not have 211 dialing access that cross municipal boundaries into the County of Dufferin, they include the following exchanges:

905 Area Code, exchanges include: **893 and 859**.

519 Area Code, exchanges include: **938, 939, 940, 941, 942 and 939**

211 Service constitutes a major improvement in the way Ontarians receive information about community based services. The Region of Peel is an important partner in 211 service delivery in collaboration with Community Information Partners Peel and the United Way of Peel.

### 2. Provincial Approach to 211 Service

The Provincial Government has been a substantial funding partner of the emerging 211 service given their jurisdictional responsibilities for human services. The provincial government established a significant investment of \$ 4.4 million in 2006-2007 for the start up of various 211 services within the Province. In 2007, 211 Peel received approximately \$115,000 in start up funding which was used to launch the 211 service within the community.

In its' 2008-2009 budget, the Province has committed \$13.5 Million in funding over 4 years for 211 services to establish and provide a governance model for 211, ensure the existing 211 services were sustainable and to expand coverage throughout Ontario.

Ontario 211 Service Corporation was established to provide oversight and direction for the 211 system and to manage and distribute Provincial funds.

In March 2010, the Ontario 211Services Corporation provided Peel with \$30,000 funding for the natural growth of the 211 service within the Region of Peel's current catchment area for program planning and increasing public awareness.

With the desire to provide full coverage for 211 to all Ontarians by 2011, Ontario 211 Services Corporation plans for 211 Peel to expand its catchment area into the County of Dufferin.

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### 3. Proposed Direction

Preliminary discussions with County of Dufferin staff have taken place with interest in further discussions of the 211 service potential. It is intended that a working committee of municipal staff be established to deal with any issues and set a path forward.

211 Peel is eligible to receive \$20,000 to begin the feasibility study, creating a framework for planning and coordination of 211 services into the County of Dufferin. This study will include the following:

- Commitment from Municipal staff
- Evaluation of database records
- Development of a planned marketing strategy
- Estimation of initial call volumes
- Planning and coordinating efforts

Future expansion will result in full coverage for 211 services in the Region of Peel including the approximately 1600 Caledon Residents and the County of Dufferin, specifically Orangeville, Shelburne and Grand Valley.

Associated costs this feasibility study and further implementation costs will be funded by the Ontario 211Services Corporation and other funding partners once an appropriate funding model is established.

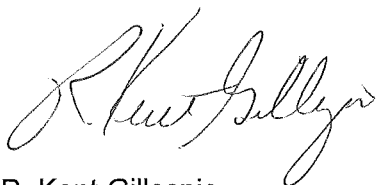
As a requirement of receiving funding for the feasibility study and implementation, Ontario 211 Services Corporation requires that Peel enter into agreements with respect to the use of the funds and proper accountability with respect to the 211 program. Council has approved agreements of this nature with respect to service within Peel, however, as this present funding will pertain to the expansion of service outside of Peel, staff are seeking council approval to proceed.

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## CONCLUSION

The expansion into the County of Dufferin allows for the remaining Caledon residents to gain easy access to 211 services immediately. The Ontario 211Services Corporation will provide \$20,000 in initial funding to complete the feasibility study.

211 Service constitutes a major improvement in the way Ontarians receive information about community based services. The Region of Peel is an important partner in 211 service delivery for Ontario in collaboration with Community Information Partners Peel and the United Way of Peel in the delivery of 211 services for Peel residents working to ensure the continued success.



R. Kent Gillespie  
Commissioner of Employee  
and Business Services

### Approved for Submission:



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D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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c. Legislative Services