



## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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### **Call 2-1-1: Finding help in Waterloo Region just got easier 211 launches in Waterloo Region**

**Waterloo Region** – On May 6, 2011 211 service launched in Waterloo Region. 211 is the first number to call to connect people to the services and help they need for more than half a million Ontarians who call every year.

211 services include a three-digit phone helpline, 2-1-1, and its website, [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca), providing access to 56,000 programs and services in the community, social, health and related government sectors. 211, a joint initiative of the Province of Ontario, Region of Waterloo and United Ways of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge, is a non-emergency number that connects callers to organizations that can help them with a multitude of challenges from finding employment, language classes and settlement services, to accessing food programs.

“Our Information and Referral specialists can help people feel empowered, especially those who have never had to ask for help before. We can help people connect to the right agencies and best resources a community has to offer,” said Rosanna Thoms, 211 Service Provider Representative. “211 specialists go the extra mile to refer callers to the agencies that best meet their needs.”

Attending the launch of 211 was representatives from community agencies, the United Ways of Cambridge and of Kitchener-Waterloo. Guest speakers included the Hon. John Milloy, MPP for Kitchener Centre, Bill Morris of 211 Ontario, Regional Chair Ken Seiling, Rosanna Thoms, 211 Service Provider Representative, Kathy Stauffer, Chair, United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries, and Victor Zamin, Chair, United Way of Kitchener-Waterloo

“We know that when 211 helps someone find a food bank, an employment centre, or an after-school program, their life is changed for the better,” said United Way Cambridge Chair, Kathy Stauffer.

United Way of Kitchener-Waterloo & Area Board Chair Victor Zamin hailed it for its convenience. “This process is about becoming more efficient. It can be difficult for residents to find the information they need without investing large amounts of time and energy. Having a person actually there giving you answers can make all the difference.”

“With the help of the United Way and other community partners, the Ontario government has committed more than \$13 million over four years to expand the 211 phone service province wide during 2011. It’s about connecting Ontarians with their community and making us all stronger,” said the Hon. John Milloy, MPP for Kitchener Centre.

“With the introduction of 211 in Waterloo Region, help will be easily available in more than 170 languages, 24/7, 365 days a year to the citizens of our community – helping them to quickly and confidentially access the health, social and community programs they need.” said Ken Seiling, Regional Chair.

211 services are now available to more than 80 per cent of the population in Ontario. Last year, over 92 per cent of callers to 211 were very satisfied with their experience, and 85 per cent were able to find the help they needed from the referral.

Visit [211ontario.ca](http://211ontario.ca) to search the services in the database and find the help you need.

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