SUBJECT: Implementation of 2-1-1 in Halton Region (FCS07019) (Wards 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15)

RECOMMENDATION:

a) That the City of Hamilton consent to the inclusion of three shared telephone exchanges (Campbellville, Hunter and Waterdown) in the implementation of 2-1-1 by the Regional Municipality of Halton at this time, provided this continues to be at no cost to the City of Hamilton or its constituents; and

b) That this matter be reviewed in the future at such point in time that 2-1-1 service provision is proposed for the remainder of the City of Hamilton.

Joseph L. Rinaldo
General Manager
Finance and Corporate Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Halton Region is planning to implement 2-1-1 and is asking for the consent of the City of Hamilton to the inclusion of shared exchanges in their initiative, attached as Appendix A. As part of their initiative, Halton Region is proposing to implement 2-1-1 calling in three exchanges that are shared with the City of Hamilton – the Campbellville, Hunter and Waterdown exchanges. As the CRTC rulings about the implementation of 2-1-1 do not provide for a mechanism for enhanced routing, Halton is proposing to respond to any callers from these three exchanges, should they call Halton 2-1-1 in error, by redirecting calls to local Hamilton referral and information service providers.
As the Halton implementation of 2-1-1 follows the intent of the original provincial plan for the implementation of 2-1-1 across the province, and as Inform Hamilton are not currently in a position to implement 2-1-1 in Hamilton, it is recommended that the City of Hamilton consents to the inclusion of the three telephone exchanges in the Halton regional implementation of 2-1-1.

**BACKGROUND:**

In August, 2001, the CRTC approved the use of 2-1-1 as a three digit telephone number for access to community information and referral services. The decision of the CRTC did not provide a mechanism for enhanced routing to allow for calls to be routed within their municipal boundaries, rather than within the telephone exchanges. The decision requires that an agency or municipality implementing 2-1-1 would have to choose to take calls from all callers within telephone exchange boundaries, regardless of which municipality they live in. In other words, an implementing agency would have to take all or none of the calls in a specified exchange.

As a follow-up to the CRTC decision, a conceptual plan for providing 2-1-1 service across Ontario was developed by the provincial United Way organization and the provincial Inform Ontario agency. This plan proposes that the province would be divided into a number of sectors and that 2-1-1 services would be provided across the province in areas or zones which are larger than municipal boundaries. At the current time, 2-1-1 is available in Toronto, Niagara Region and Simcoe County, is being implemented by Halton Region, Thunder Bay, Windsor and Ottawa, and is under consideration by Peel Region. According to the conceptual plan, service for Hamilton would be provided by someone in our area, which could be either Halton or Niagara Region or some other service provider. One of the other difficulties with the CRTC decision was that it did not provide for a funding mechanism. Halton Region, along with Windsor, Ottawa, and Thunder Bay have received provincial funding for the first year’s start up costs. However, the longer term funding has not yet been determined.

In order to implement 2-1-1 in Halton, they have had to determine which exchanges to include in the service provision area and which exchanges not to include. They decided that they would provide the service in the exchanges where there are 100 or more households within Halton Region, which in Hamilton includes the Campbellville, Hunter, and Waterdown exchanges. Once implemented, anyone in those exchanges, including people in Hamilton, could call 2-1-1 and they would reach the Halton 2-1-1 service. This service will not be advertised as being available to Hamilton residents, nor is it intended to respond to the requests for information or referral to Hamilton residents. The intention would be to redirect callers from Hamilton to the appropriate number for the existing Hamilton information and referral agencies (e.g. Inform Hamilton and its partners, Contact Hamilton, Community Care Access Centre, etc).

Although it is not the intent to advertise the service or provide the service to the Hamilton residents in these exchanges, the rules requiring the 2-1-1 phone number to be implemented in complete exchanges means that a large number of Hamilton households, should they call 2-1-1 in error, would reach Halton 2-1-1 as follows:
ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

It is unfortunate that the CRTC did not provide for enhanced routing for this service, but the intent of the original conceptual plan for 2-1-1 anticipated that the province would be covered by a limited number of 2-1-1 service providers, providing this service across the province, and therefore did not address the matter of exchanges crossing municipal boundaries.

It is not to look at the rules governing the implementation in Halton than in Hamilton, the other two exchanges have a significantly larger number to ensure that the Hunter and Waterdown exchanges would be able to the provision by the Hamilton 2-1-1 service in the future, rather than having to be redirected by the Halton 2-1-1 service. The recommendation is to allow for reconsideration in the future, should a 2-1-1 service be implemented for Hamilton. Kate Johnston, Manager of Customer Service Improvement projects at Halton Region, has confirmed that this would not be a concern.

The other possible long term implication is that there may be pressure created by residents for the implementation of a 2-1-1 service in Hamilton. As the CRTC did not outline a funding model, should there be pressure for a 2-1-1 service in Hamilton, there will be corresponding financial pressures. It may be possible that Halton or Niagara would want to provide this service, or that Inform Hamilton and the United Way would provide the service. They would also have funding requirements to provide the service. In terms of the funding of 2-1-1, however, the request from Halton does not directly relate to funding and their request for consent does not create any financial obligations for the City of Hamilton or its residents. For clarity, this has also been addressed in the recommendation.

As 2-1-1 is not to be implemented at this time in Hamilton, and as the rules governing the implementation in Halton Region mean that they cannot implement this across their region without extending the number to people in adjacent municipalities, they are requesting the consent of Hamilton to the provision of the service in three of the exchanges that are shared with Hamilton. It is important also to recognize that the implementation of 2-1-1 in Halton is being done to facilitate easy access for Halton Regional residents to information and referral services related to a community’s social and health services and programs, something which the City of Hamilton would not object to, provided the interests of our community are not negatively impacted.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

The only two alternatives are to grant consent to the request from Halton or not to grant consent. It is anticipated that should consent not be granted, then the City of Hamilton
would need to be prepared to make representations to the CRTC with respect to the rationale and reasoning for not agreeing.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial or staffing implications to the City of Hamilton as a result of this request for consent.

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

There are no policies affecting the proposal.

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION:**

Lesley Russell of Inform Hamilton was consulted. She noted that they have been following the discussion and monitoring the results of implementation of 2-1-1 across the province. They are not in a position to consider the implementation of 2-1-1 in Hamilton, and they recognize that, should Halton proceed, callers from Hamilton who might call 2-1-1 and reach Halton 2-1-1, would be redirected to their agency or other Hamilton agencies. They do not object to the request from Halton.

**CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:**

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line” (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

**Community Well-Being is enhanced.** □ Yes □ No

There is no benefit for Hamilton's community in this proposal. Should callers from Hamilton dial 2-1-1 and reach Halton, they will be redirected to the appropriate Hamilton information and referral agency.

**Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.** □ Yes □ No

There are no impacts on the environment.

**Economic Well-Being is enhanced.** □ Yes □ No

There are no impacts on the economy.

**Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?** □ Yes □ No

**Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?** □ Yes □ No

There are no impacts to City staff.

Att.
Dear Verna:

Re: 211 Halton Implementation

As you are aware, in August 2001, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTCO) approved the use of 211 dialing for telephone access to community information and referral (Decision 2001-475).

Dialing 211 allows residents to obtain information and referral to a full range of non-emergency social, health and government services in their community. To date, 211 has been implemented in four communities across Canada, specifically Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, Niagara Region and Simcoe County. In addition four other municipalities in Ontario, including Halton Region, are currently in the planning stages of implementing 211.

Through Halton’s 211 planning process, it has come to light that there are four telephone exchanges shared between Halton and Hamilton. For your information, telephone service providers are not required to offer communities the opportunity to implement ‘enhanced routing’ which allows communities to route calls based on which municipality the household resides. In order to minimize the number of non-Halton households that would be served by a Halton 211 call centre, Halton is proposing to only route three of the four telephone exchanges shared by Halton Region and the City of Hamilton to Halton’s 211 call centre.

For your information, the below table provides specific information Halton obtained from Bell Canada on the three telephone exchanges that cross Halton Region and City of Hamilton boundaries and to which Halton proposes to provide 211 service.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telephone Exchange Name</th>
<th>Municipalities Sharing this Exchange</th>
<th># of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Puslinch</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>2312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter</td>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>1189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>54713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterdown</td>
<td>Burlington</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>10541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Hamilton Households</td>
<td></td>
<td>65,276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no financial implications from Bell Canada to the City of Hamilton associated with Halton Region's intention to deliver 211 to residents of these three exchanges.

The attached 211 fact sheet describes the vision for implementing 211 across Canada.

As part of Halton’s application to Bell Canada to implement 211 in the above-noted three shared exchanges, it is necessary to obtain your consent. To that end, we would appreciate you signing this letter in the space provided below in order to indicate your consent to Halton implementing 211 in the above noted shared exchanges.

Should you have any questions about this request or about Halton’s 211 planning process, please feel free to contact me at 905-825-6000 ext 7230 and I would be pleased to discuss this matter with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Kate Johnston
Manager, Customer Service Improvement Projects

c. Jane MacCaskill, Acting CAO, Halton Region
   Carleen Carroll, Director, Community Relations, Halton Region
   Leslie Russell, Executive Director, InformHamilton
   Darrel Skidmore, Executive Director, United Way of Burlington, Hamilton-Wentworth

Verna Radford
Manager, Customer Contact Centre
City of Hamilton
How would 211 Benefit Governments?

Governments at all levels - federal, provincial, regional and municipal - are looking for ways to better serve the public by offering seamless access to programs and services. 211 is consistent with this move toward integrated, single window approaches to service delivery. It has two core functions: collecting and managing information and disseminating this information through 211 call centres, client contact centres and the Internet.

211 can relieve pressure on other information services provided by governments and reduce the number of help-lines supported by governments. It can help reduce the demand for government resources now used to build and maintain public awareness about how to access government programs. 211 can deliver accurate information and important messages that dispel harmful rumours during an emergency or times of crisis. In addition, 211 can provide a vehicle through which people can give support or volunteer.

What was the impact of 211 in Toronto?

Toronto's 211 has proven to be a credible, valuable and valued service. In June 2002, United Way of Greater Toronto, Community Information Toronto and the City of Toronto entered into a unique partnership to deliver 211 to residents of the 416/647 area codes. The project was also made possible through the generosity of donors committed to demonstrating the merits and applicability of 211 in Canada.

In its first year of operation, 211 answered nearly 300,000 calls and received over 225,000 visits to its website. On a single day, staff answered just over 1,000 calls compared to a pre-211 daily average of 381 calls. Annual call volume increased from 3.8% to 10.4%, and continues to grow by an average of about 7% a month. Client satisfaction with the service is very high - over 90% - as is the number of callers who indicate they would use the service again and would recommend it to family and friends - consistently 100%.

How will 211 be rolled out across the country?

A 211 steering committee, review panel and implementors group have been created to oversee the roll-out of 211 across Canada and to ensure that consistent standards are developed and applied.

Because 211 is community based, its shape may differ from province to province and even from city to city. In Ontario, United Ways-Centrais and their partners have developed a five-year implementation plan that builds on the existing infrastructure of Ontario's network of community information and referral organizations and the latest information and telephone technology. In other provinces, 211 is being developed on a city by city basis.

Will every community have its own 211?

Not every community will have a 211 service - not all have the capacity or the resources. Given the diversity of Canada's regions, different approaches will likely be designed to suit local circumstances. For example, the plan in Ontario is to establish eight regional Information Centres with a single, province-wide database. This will ensure province-wide access whether you live in a city or rural area.

Where is 211 operating today?

In the United States, 211 is operating in 24 states and is accessible to over 70 million Americans. In 2004, Senators and Congressional officials are supporting the passage of legislation to ensure full national implementation and sustainability of 2-1-1. Sponsored by a bipartisan group of legislators, and led by Senators Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Dole, the "Calling for 2-1-1 Act" was introduced in September 2003. The Act provides funding - up to $200M U.S. - "for 100% access to 2-1-1 for local communities nationwide by authorizing federal funding to stimulate expansion and widen access to the 2-1-1 service".

FAQs on 211: Connecting Communities
In Canada, 211 has been operating in Toronto since June 2002. It is expected that this service will be available in at least two other communities by the end of 2004 and will expand gradually in following years.

**Why is United Way - Centraide involved in 211?**
United Way - Centraide helps find solutions to community problems, works to build healthy communities, and is a significant funder of agencies providing social and health services and programs. 211 complements United Way’s role as a funder of community services and social infrastructure by helping to connect people to the services they need.

**Where can I get more information on 211?**
The application to the CRTC and input into the Public Notice can be found and read in Word and pdf formats:

- OR
- in French on [http://www.crtc.gc.ca/PartVII/Fr/8665/C12-12.htm](http://www.crtc.gc.ca/PartVII/Fr/8665/C12-12.htm)

- The Canadian 211 web site, [www.211.ca](http://www.211.ca) is in development.
- Visit the U.S. 211 web site at [www.211.org](http://www.211.org) to find out more about U.S. initiatives.
- The Alliance of Information and Referral systems has an extensive web site at [www.air.org](http://www.air.org)

To find out more about the partner organizations that filed the CRTC application visit their web sites:

- Community Information Toronto [www.communityinfotoronto.org](http://www.communityinfotoronto.org)
- InformCanada [www.informcanada.ca](http://www.informcanada.ca)
- United Way of Canada-Centraide Canada [United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada](http://www.unitedwayofcanada.ca)
- United Way of Greater Toronto [www.unitedwaytoronto.com](http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com)

Updated April 15, 2004