



January 8, 2018

Honourable Irfan Sabir
Minister of Community and Social Services
224 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Sabir:

Each year at our annual Convention, AUMA members discuss and vote on proposed resolutions related to matters that impact municipalities, but require action by other orders of government. Enclosed for your response is the 2017 resolution that pertains to your ministry:

- AUMA Resolution 2017.B13 - Provincial Funding of 211.

We look forward to your response to this resolution.

If you wish to review the resolutions pertaining to other ministries, they can be found on our website at: <https://auma.ca/advocacy-services/resolutions/resolutions-library>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Morishita', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Barry Morishita
AUMA President

Enclosure

WHEREAS 211 is an easy to remember three-digit telephone number that provides reliable information and referrals to community, social, health and government related human services;

WHEREAS 211 is available in 175 languages and 18 per cent of Alberta's population is currently made up of immigrants;

WHEREAS 211 is currently available to approximately 70 per cent of the residents of Alberta;

WHEREAS 211 is an information service available to many Albertans and a provincial strategy exists to extend the service to all Albertans;

WHEREAS the strategy to extend services to all Albertans has been built on the engagement of communities and local volunteer centres;

WHEREAS the United Way has been instrumental in bringing 211 to cities in Alberta, and it is now playing a leading role, along with many community partners, to initiate and implement a province-wide service so more people can benefit from the 24 hour support;

WHEREAS funding has primarily been from the United Way, Region 6 CFSA and FCSS in Edmonton, Calgary and Bow Valley, and municipalities;

WHEREAS the 211 program has long term successful funding in Edmonton and Calgary, funding is needed to extend the service to the balance of the province; and

WHEREAS the additional funding needed for a provincial 211 service is expected to cost \$650,000 to start-up with ongoing costs of \$750,000 annually.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association urge the Province of Alberta to provide a provincial funding source that would provide for 211 services to all Albertans.

BACKGROUND:

This resolution was initially introduced to and endorsed by the AUMA in 2010. In June 2011 Alberta Municipal Affairs provided the following response to the resolution:

"211 Alberta currently covers approximately 70 per cent of the citizens of Alberta and supports recommendation 17 of Alberta's Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force report: Establish a Family Source within the provincial government to provide a central source for information, resources and community connections.

While there are merits to expanding 211 Alberta to the rest of the province, there are significant costs as well. As a result, the Government of Alberta is looking further into this issue with a review to identifying opportunities to:

- Increase efficiencies and reduce duplication of effort;

- Eliminate unnecessary wait times;
- Manage the escalation of issues to crisis by providing the right supports at the right time;
- Increase collaboration and cost-sharing; and
- Slow cost increases and reduce costs.”

Since 2011, 211 has continued to grow but without the commitment of ongoing provincial funding. The AUMA notes that while this resolution was adopted it has now expired.

211 was launched in Edmonton in 2004 and in Calgary in 2005. 211 works to identify a person’s needs and concerns, performs a triage role to identify the most immediate needs and then takes steps to connect the person with appropriate human service organizations;

The 211 service is an enhancement, not a replacement, of local Information & Referral services currently operating across the province. In addition to helping people find the information they need, 211 analyzes data from calls to identify emerging needs, gaps in services and areas of high demand. 211 shares this data with various stakeholders, including local municipalities.

In 2016, daily online chat was added to increase the ways that Albertans can access our service.

A province-wide 211 service will ensure that all people, regardless of where they live, will have equal access to information. For example, this would allow a resident in Lethbridge to easily identify home support options for their elderly parents living in Grande Prairie, or assist an immigrant in finding services once they move to Calgary.

Both costs and benefits are optimized with a province-wide approach. Furthermore, the overall goal is to eventually have 211 services across Canada. By having a province-wide service, it is much easier to plug into a national network, providing rapid and effective service for all Canadians.

Comprehensive research on the costs and benefits of 211 has been conducted in both Canada and the United States. United Way organizations in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia and Ontario have worked with a number of organizations, including Deloitte, to develop specific business cases and identify the potential of a 211 service. These studies confirmed the strength of the 211 business cases and the inherent value of the service.

Each of the studies concluded that the measurable benefits of a national system outweigh the costs by a significant margin. Everyone—public, governments and service providers—stand to realize substantial benefits from the time and cost savings that 211 provides.

There are a number of N11 phone numbers utilized by the public for a variety of services. 211 connects you to a full range of non-emergency social, health and government related human services in your community. In Alberta, 311 provides access to the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary’s municipal information, programs and services. 411 provides access to general telephone directory listings, 511 provides information on Alberta road conditions and 811 provides nurse advice and general health information. Lastly, 911 is an emergency number for medical, fire and police emergencies only.

Alberta 211: <http://ab.211.ca/homepage>