



# **United Way Centraide Canada**

Pre-Budget Submission

to

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

August 2016



The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance:

Since 1917, the United Way Centraide Movement has been dedicated to creating opportunities for a better life for all Canadians. United Way Centraide Canada (UWCC) provides national leadership and supports United Ways Centraides in over 100 local communities across Canada to meet urgent human need and invest in long-term solutions that address challenging social, economic and cultural issues.

Each year, the desire to help others motivates over one million Canadians to support their local communities through the United Way Centraide Movement. Our donors and volunteers are your constituents. Annually, United Ways Centraides raise and invest over \$500 million to strengthen their communities. These funds support nearly 7,000 programs that touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

As Canada's largest non-government funder of community and social service initiatives, the United Way Centraide Movement's insights are based on direct experience of funding and implementing innovative solutions in communities throughout Canada.

One of the greatest strengths of the United Way Centraide Movement is its deep engagement with local communities. We view government leadership and partnership with other sectors – civil society, business and labour - as critical to our collective goal of successfully tackling the many complex social, economic and cultural challenges we face while building strong healthy communities.

The Committee has specifically asked for recommendation designed to:

1. Help Canadians, specifically the unemployed, Indigenous peoples, those with a disability, and seniors, to maximize their contributions to the country's economic growth;
2. Help businesses in all regions and sectors expand, innovate, and become more prosperous; and,
3. Ensure that urban, rural, and remote communities have what they need to prosper and contribute to growth.

UWCC is pleased to provide the Standing Committee on Finance with our recommendations for budgetary measures designed to help address urgent human needs and strengthen Canadian communities. Recommendations we believe support all three of the goals the Committee has identified. We would welcome the opportunity to address these matters directly with the Committee during the upcoming hearings.



**Recommendation #1. Resources be allocated in the 2017-18 budget to enable the federal government to join the funding partnership that United Ways and Centraides have established with provinces, territories and municipalities to make 211 available to all Canadians.**

Connecting Canadians to information and help:

211 is an extraordinary example of social innovation. A 21<sup>st</sup> century social infrastructure initiative creating a comprehensive, multi-channel information and navigation system encompassing the full range of community, social, non-clinical health and related government services.

211 solves a fundamental problem – people often cannot find the right information or connect with the assistance they require to deal with various challenges, because they do not know where to look.

Canada is blessed with an impressive array of services and supports offered by various levels of government, an assortment of government agencies, and many community-based providers. However, successfully navigating this complex and often disconnected service landscape can be difficult and sometimes bewildering, particularly for the uninitiated, or those handicapped by language and other barriers.

By providing a quick and easy first point of access to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 150 languages, 211 levels the playing field so all Canadians have equal access to the information required to make informed choices, and can connect with the assistance or supports they and their families may need. In addition to strengthening Canada's health and human services, 211 enables Canadians to address day-to-day issues in a timely way, live as independently as possible, and become more engaged with their communities. This both improves and saves lives.

A diverse set of stakeholders are direct beneficiaries of 211:

- Families and Individuals – by connecting people with help, 211 reduces the number of personal issues that escalate into a personal crisis. Families can locate the help to manage children's issues. Caregivers can find the support they need for loved ones. Lives are saved when persons in crisis receive immediate attention.
- Newcomers and Refugees – 211 provides direct support to assist immigrants, refugees and their sponsors, and works collaboratively with settlement agencies to complement and support their roles. For example, 211 is actively responding to Syrian refugees and their sponsors who need help navigating the intricate web of social services that are so critical for resettlement and integration.



- Vulnerable Canadians – excellent specialized programs exist through agencies dealing with seniors, veterans, newcomers, mental health and addiction, HIV / AIDS and others. 211 can strengthen the direct connection with these specialized programs and enhance public access.
- First Responders – 211 enables first responders to focus on containing a disaster or emergency. 211 assists communities by acting as a reliable channel for public safety announcements, including evacuation routes and safe gathering sites, as well as coordinating volunteers and donations, as was experienced most recently in Fort McMurray.

A rich source of data:

211 also addresses a second fundamental challenge – all levels of government and non-governmental funders lack the basic information on the need, demand and utilization of the services and programs we support to inform our investment decisions. Collectively, we lack the sound data required to facilitate timely adjustments that maximize value for money and enable nimble adaptation of service offerings in order to meet the ever-shifting needs of the communities we serve.

211 is uniquely positioned to capture data on the supply of and demand for social and community services and offer previously unavailable real-time business intelligence insights. The enormous potential of 211's rich trove of data to drive adaption and spur innovation is largely untapped, but it is already being used to inform municipal planning decisions, local service provision, and funding investments.

For all Canadians:

The vision for a seamless Pan-Canadian 211 system builds on the existing infrastructure base, and proven track record, provided by the award-winning 211 telephone help line (dial 2-1-1) and online service, which is currently available to 62% of Canadians. It also leverages, an existing \$10 million of annual funding which has already been committed by the United Way Centraide Movement, provincial and municipal governments.

The value of 211 has been clearly substantiated in both Canada and U.S., where over 93 per cent of Americans now enjoy access to 211. A very modest federal government investment will ensure all Canadians can benefit from access to 211, and will trigger the transformation of 211 from a network of regionally disconnected services into an integrated omni-channel Pan-Canadian system.

Such an investment would also provide a positive signal to provincial and territorial governments and spur their increased funding participation, while at the same time help expand corporate partnerships and leverage additional private philanthropy.



Extensive work has already been done with federal officials to develop a fully costed and fully vetted proposal to expand 211 Canada-wide and facilitate its transformation into a national information navigation system for human services. This work also modeled leveraging the 211 technology and service platform to address the specific needs of a number of target populations with an enhanced level of service.

The proposal has two components:

1. \$18.5 million federal investment over five years to expand 211 service to all Canadians, and transform 211 into an integrated system.
2. An additional \$12.5 million over five years to address the particular needs of four priority groups – veterans, caregivers, vulnerable seniors, and refugees.

The total federal investment for 211 service expansion, national transformation, and implementation of the four enhancements, is \$31 million over five years.

Please note: component #1 can be done with or without component #2, however component #2 cannot be done without component #1.

## **Recommendation #2    Multi-year investments be allocated to enable implementation of the National Housing Strategy now being developed.**

The 2016-17 budget included a number of interim provisions to help address the housing needs of Canadians, particularly those with low and moderate incomes. More recently, the Minister of Families Children and Social Development and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation launched a major public consultation designed to inform development of Canada's first National Housing Strategy.

The consultation proposes a bold aspirational vision - *All Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and they can afford. Housing is the cornerstone of building sustainable, inclusive communities and a strong Canadian economy where we can prosper and thrive.*

UWCC strongly agrees. Adequate, stable and affordable housing is essential for individual and community wellbeing – its importance cannot be overstated.

For Canada to make real progress towards achieving the vision, new policy directions and additional federal investment will be required.

To complement and inform the development of policy solutions in this crucial area, UWCC has convened key nation housing organizations – home builders, homelessness advocates, private



landlords, non-profit and co-operate housing providers – and a number of like-minded philanthropic partners. Working together under the banner of the National Housing Collaborative, the members have embarked on a process designed to generate a limited number of transformative, durable and innovative policy options that can support a strong, vibrant housing system.

The National Housing Collaborative is currently developing policy options to address four specific challenges:

- Housing affordability for low-income Canadians who all too often need to choose between putting food on the table or keeping a roof over-head,
- Creating additional rental housing, and refurbishing the existing stock of affordable housing to ensure it remains viable, affordable, and is made more energy efficient,
- Stabilizing the existing social housing stock and leveraging underutilized assets, and
- Improving service coordination and addressing the root causes of homelessness to ensure that homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time experience.

The specific cost associated with the policy options being developed both by the NHC and the government's own process have not yet been determined. Notwithstanding, UWCC urges the Standing Committee to support the need for new federal investment to enable implementation of the National Housing Strategy, and to ensure these investments are structured to accommodate the multi-year and phased-in nature of this commitment.

**Recommendation #3      Resources be allocated in the 2017-18 budget to enable the federal government to undertake a comprehensive and fully-resourced process to establish a new legal and regulatory framework for charities and non-profits.**

Canada has one of the world's largest and most highly developed non-profit and charitable sectors. Collectively, it accounts for over 8% of Canada's GDP and employs some 2 million people. The economic and social impact of charities and non-profits is evident in every community – urban and rural, north and south – and touches millions of people.

The sector's diversity encompasses many of our most cherished institutions, organizations that deliver an enormous number of vital services, and includes a wide range of vehicles for pursuing learning, artistic expression, and social innovation. Charities and non-profits make an incalculable contribution to the vitality of communities and the wellbeing of all Canadians

The government has promised to introduce a new legislative and regulatory framework for charities and non-profits. Reflecting the broad scope and complex nature of the



sector, the Mandate Letters of several Ministers include specific reference to achievement of this goal.

The current regulatory regime has served us reasonably well, but needs modernization. Among other shortcomings, it limits the extent to which non-profits and charities can pursue revenue generation, and participate in social finance and innovation partnerships or business activities aimed at generating public benefits and expanding their mission-based impact.

At the same time, our regulatory regime needs to protect the integrity of the sector and ensure Canadians can continue to have a high degree of trust in charities and non-profits.

It will be essential for the new legislative and regulatory framework to strike the right balance right between enabling charities and non-profits to do more and expand their impact, while ensuring the appropriate level of accountability and transparency.

This will require a careful and unhurried process, one properly resourced so the best experts and research can be brought to bear, and a wide range of stakeholders can be meaningfully engaged and contribute their best thinking. The scope of the sector, the interest of various departments of government, and the multi-jurisdictional responsibilities for its regulation, will all need to be considered and wisely orchestrated.

Thank you.

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