When life gets hard
At Findhelp Information Services we couldn’t deliver our broad range of services without the generous support of our funding partners. Many have been steadfast champions of 211 and information and referral generally, especially for Canadians who face barriers to access such as youth, seniors, newcomers, Francophones and the disabled. Our funders understand and value the expertise of Findhelp and our agency partners in providing quality information and in cost-effectively sharing this information and expertise by phone, Internet and print.

Findhelp and 211 work in partnership with the following funders:

• United Way Toronto
• City of Toronto
• Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General
• Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
• Ontario Trillium Foundation
• Citizenship and Immigration Canada
• Ontario 211 Services Corporation
• Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres (OACCAC), through InformOntario
• Volunteer Toronto
The last twelve months has brought a new energy, focus and drive to our mission. We stand poised to dramatically transform Canadian access to information. Our Board of Directors is proud of the agency’s accomplishments, and grateful to all at Findhelp, and our partners, for bringing us to this pivotal moment.

We would like to thank the staff and managers for their dedication to our mission and to Janice Hayes for her passion and direction as Executive Director and CEO. Our close working relationship with Ontario 211 Services Corporation will continue to provide leadership in areas including provincial data quality assurance, standards, training and the expansion of the 211 system. And with most of our staff having passed AIRS certification or in the process of achieving it, we are able to say with confidence and pride that Findhelp services easily rank among the most professional on the continent.

In this Annual Report, we continue our tradition of keeping you abreast of the many initiatives, milestones and achievements that mark the work that Findhelp does in your community. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to say thank you to all our funders, stakeholders and employees, who continue to make such a difference to so many lives, every day.

Bruce Reynolds
President, Board of Directors
Helping Canadians find help has been our calling from the very beginning, when Findhelp launched the first 211 phone service in Canada in 2002. Since then we have referred, counseled, suggested, coaxed and encouraged millions of callers to find the community, social, health and related government services that best suit their needs. Along the way we have innovated technology, process and training to raise efficiency and expertise within both our own agency, and the professional service community we support. We are repeatedly told by professionals that these tools help them do their work more effectively.

We are very grateful to Bruce Reynolds, President of Findhelp Information Services, and the dedicated volunteers on the Board of Directors who have given their time and expertise generously to Findhelp during this transformative year. I continue to be inspired by our staff’s talent, professionalism, sensitivity and hard work.

The consistently excellent feedback from callers and users of our print, Internet and training resources is testimony to the difference that our staff makes. Our team of editors, inquiry service counsellors, trainers, systems experts and administrators enables our partners, our funders and our community to rely with confidence on Findhelp.

To our funders who continue to believe in our mission and vision — thank you for your continued support.

Janice Hayes
Executive Director and CEO
One morning I received an emotional call from Sameer*, who had settled his wife and two children in Canada from Pakistan in 2007. He had just lost his technology job and was receiving Employment Insurance benefits, and while his wife was still working, their combined income was not able to meet their mortgage payments. Before calling, he had already contacted an employment agency, as well as a settlement agency specializing in foreign workers... but he did not find the help he was seeking. Distraught and frustrated, Sameer was on the verge of “giving up” on Canada and moving his family back home.

I listened to his story, validated his frustrations and revisited the many reasons why he originally chose to leave his home country and seek a better life for his children. I suggested he consider seeking employment outside of the technology industry, and provided some contact information to help start his search.

Sameer was grateful and told me that he felt much better. He said that I had helped him gain some perspective and provided him with new ideas to continue his job search.

- Pasha*, I&R Specialist

*Names and other details have been changed to respect our callers’ privacy.
Inquiry Services

Up to fourteen hundred times a day, someone with a need is connected to a service that can address that need. Findhelp provides Central Region’s 211 service, a free and confidential multilingual telephone line available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to anyone in the 416/647 area.

The people answering these calls are Information and Referral (I&R) Specialists, social service professionals with years of front-line experience and specialized information and referral training. This prepares them to handle the wide range of calls to our help lines – from a simple question about local childcare centres to the complex needs of a person distressed over discrimination.

Our staff must have expertise in the following social and human services:

- mental health
- employment
- government services
- housing
- financial assistance
- food needs
- newcomer services

To serve clients, our I&R specialists must also be highly skilled with:

- attentive listening skills
- comprehension of client needs and concerns through assessment of each call
- exhaustive knowledge of social programs and services
- comprehensive research skills
- the ability to clearly explain complex information, such as eligibility requirements and application procedures

Findhelp is accredited with the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), the international stan-
and referral, and is recognized for the high calibre of its staff and as a leader in quality 211 service delivery. This has well positioned us to guide and support the building of 211 capacity in other parts of Ontario.

Findhelp and four other Ontario 211 providers participated in the Service Quality Management Group (SQM) study. All of the 211 organizations that participated performed extremely well, and scored very high in all the key satisfaction indicators. The rankings consistently place 211 in the top quartile. In addition to outperforming the ‘Average Call Centre’ scores in a number of areas, the 211 scores matched or came very close to matching SQM’s ‘best call centres’ results.

Key performance indicators:

- 89% of clients were very satisfied with their 211 call centre experience
- 89% of clients were very satisfied with the I&R Specialist who handled their call
- 97% of clients had their call / issue resolved

We continue our commitment to meeting the needs of newcomers with 21 languages spoken by our on-site counsellors, the coordination of a language bank of 41 languages spoken by local information providers, as well as access when needed to 170 languages through a three-way interpretation service.

Findhelp also supports other service and information lines including:

- 211 night and weekend calls for the 211 centres serving Halton, Niagara, Simcoe County, Thunder Bay and Windsor
- The Ministry of the Attorney General’s Ontario Victim Support Line 1-888-579-2888 (Toronto 416-314-2447)
- Central Access (withdrawal management service for five Toronto hospitals) 1-866-366-9513
Strengthening Ontarians’ Access to Community Services through 211

211 Ontario is an integrated telephone and Internet-based system providing callers and users with one-stop information and referral to community, social, health and related government services. Findhelp partners with other 211 providers and data partners, and works closely with the Ontario 211 Services Corporation with the goal of building a robust 211 system for all Ontarians. Findhelp will continue to provide leadership in data quality, professional telephone service, training, information technology application development, and the expansion of the 211 system.

211Ontario.ca consolidates more than 56,000 services and programs into one bilingual, searchable website. The site features keyword, subject and location/proximity searching with a sophisticated mapping interface, an invaluable tool especially for Ontarians who previously had no or limited access to information on services.

Most of the services on 211Ontario.ca are provided by nonprofit, community-based or government organizations that provide a direct service to the public. Inclusion on 211Ontario.ca is free.

Top 5 searches on 211Toronto.ca:

- Employment, education and training
- Youth
- Abuse including sexual assault
- Health
- Settlement and newcomer services

211Ontario.ca

Ontario residents now have a powerful new Internet resource with reliable information on community, social, health and related government services.
Online Directories

In addition to coordinating the central database for 211Ontario.ca, Findhelp maintains or provides data for several other important sites:

- Access to Professions and Trades in Ontario
- Directory of Justice Services and Resources in Ontario
- Directory of Youth Justice Services in Ontario
- Employment Ontario (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
- United Way Toronto Directory of Services
- Ontario Aboriginal Calendar and Services Directory
- Ontario Victim Support Services
- 211Pro (a new application for Information & Referral specialists)

Technology

With the help of a generous grant from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Ontario 211 Services Corporation, Findhelp was able to purchase equipment and services to improve and strengthen our aging technical infrastructure. The renewed network and server architecture will allow for increased bandwidth for web hosting, effective emergency failover, and enhanced ability to deliver 211 web services to Ontario and British Columbia.

Inquiry Services switched to a new application, 211Pro, to support the provision of 211 service to callers and to track and report on calls. The new web-based application was developed with full participation from staff, reducing the time to implement and ensuring that 211Pro meets the needs of I&R Specialists.

Findhelp also participated in an exercise to design the next version of 211Ontario.ca. Usability Matters, a consulting firm specializing in user interface design, was hired to work with Findhelp, the Ontario 211 Services Corporation and a small team of 211 Operators to redesign the website, giving higher visibility to local content and needs while retaining the 211 standards.
Sian*, a single mother from Shanghai, called me late at night last April. She had a teenage child, and was recovering from cancer surgery. She was receiving funds from the Ontario Disability Support Program and would soon be moving into subsidized housing in Brampton. When we spoke, she admitted that she had no furniture or appliances. Back in China, she had been a professional in a large manufacturing company, but had chosen to remain isolated from the Chinese community here in Canada, as she did not want anyone to know about her hardships. And, due to the language barrier, general labour jobs were the only ones she felt capable of handling.

I gave her the contact information for the Salvation Army and for the Furniture Bank, so she could find furniture and the basic household items she needed. I also suggested that at some point, everybody faces difficult times during their lifetime, and that often, the local community can be very supportive. I suggested she contact the Chinese Professional Association and the Centre for Information and Community Services of Ontario (CICS). At CICS, she would be able to join an English class and would be able to begin socializing with others to help get back on her feet.

- Carol*, I&R Specialist

*Names and other details have been changed to respect our callers’ privacy.
Training

In addition to the regular information and referral and certification training Findhelp offers, this year saw the launch and completion of a highly successful training project for almost 1200 settlement workers and over 100 managers. This training was funded through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and was conducted between January and June 2010.

Customized training was also conducted for the City of Toronto’s newly launched 311 Service, the Centre for Community Learning and Development, Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) and the University of Toronto.

Outreach

Findhelp continues to play an active role in our communities through our outreach efforts. We have conducted over 100 agency visits, given numerous presentations to newcomer groups, job seekers and service providers and attended many conferences and community events.

Expansion of 211 Service to York and Durham Regions

Findhelp has been working with Ontario 211 Services Corporation, local United Ways, and agency and data partners in York and Durham Regions to build alliances and develop the capacity to bring 24-hour-a-day 211 service to another 1.7 million people in the Greater Toronto Area. York and Durham regions are expected to account for an additional 51,000 calls on Toronto’s 211 service in the first year — a number expected to almost triple over the next few years.

As other 211 service providers in the province are also expanding, it is anticipated that by the end of 2011 the demand in Ontario will increase substantially from this past year’s 445,000 calls. Findhelp has been preparing to play a major role supporting the expected growth of after-hours and weekend service for other 211 service providers throughout the province.

Strategic Plan energizes new Change and Performance Management processes

Staff has taken a leading role in developing and initializing a Change Management process at Findhelp. This organizational cultural change has created a staff-confirmed set of organizational values that identify desired key behaviours: Leadership ... Respect ... Diversity ... Service to Others. These behaviours, in turn, inform the new performance management system that helps individual employees tie their work goals to the agency’s strategic plan.

The Blue Book

The Blue Book is the annual printed Directory of Community Services in Toronto. It has been a cornerstone of Findhelp’s resources since 1952 and, even with the advent of our Internet resources, continues to be a popular resource for professionals in the field. Our regular 211Update e-bulletin also helps keep professionals informed on key changes in the sector such as new and recently closed programs.

French and other language services

Findhelp met with other 211 services in Ontario to develop strategies to strengthen 211 services for francophone agencies and residents across Ontario. Findhelp is currently one of two designated bilingual 211 services in the province, the other being 211 East which is based in Ottawa. Findhelp, along with 211 Ontario Services Corporation and the other 211 agencies in Ontario, is committed to increasing service to francophone callers to 24 hours daily, as well as increasing the quantity of French-language resources in the province’s online 211 database.
Findhelp has an ongoing strategy to provide 24/7 multilingual telephone service to residents of Toronto – and throughout Ontario after-hours. Currently I&R Specialists serve callers in 21 languages. By coordinating with multilingual agencies in the area or using a commercial translation service, they are able to assist callers in 170 languages.

Canadian Taxonomy of Human Services

Besides providing ongoing support for the development and use of the Canadian Taxonomy (data classification system), Findhelp is responsible, on behalf of Inform Canada, for creating and maintaining its French counterpart, the Taxonomie canadienne des services humains. Both are based on the AIRS/211 L.A. Taxonomy of Human Services, which in turn often adopts the terms it develops specifically to capture the very active service system in Canada (particularly in the employment sector). With the increasing consolidation of data across Ontario, the focus this year has been on preparations for closer synchronizing of the indexing on 211Ontario.ca.
WHEN A JOB IS HARD

FIND

When a job is hard find help.
Possibilities Online Employment Resource Centre (www.poss.ca)

Possibilities Online Employment Resource Centre is a free bilingual online magazine addressing the diverse needs of Toronto job seekers. Through partnership agreements, our content, toolkits and blog entries are re-published on Employment News, GrandToronto.ca, Alberta Employment News and Now Magazine. This year Possibilities added social networking tools to the site. Our Facebook and Twitter feeds have been taken up by agencies and individuals in the Toronto area.

“Poss.ca is incredible for the wealth of information and links to other resources.”

“Thank you very much for giving me a very valuable information about the ways I could find a good job in Canada and get a legal status. It’s very important for me and I’m glad that there still are people like you who help others in situations like mine. I appreciate that very much.”

“Thank you very much for the prompt and very relevant suggestions. May you continue to be a blessing to people like me.”

Employment Ontario

We help people, including youth and older workers, who are recently unemployed and face barriers to employment by powering the government of Ontario’s bilingual “Find Employment and Training Services” database. It is part of Employment Ontario, the network of employment and training delivery organizations that offer services funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Findhelp provides leadership in coordinating the database partners across the province, each of whom researches and uploads local employment and training information.
Board Members
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Ivan McFarlane
Jane Henderson
Marvin Givertz
Mary Jo Walker
Richard Joy
Don Ludlow
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Executive Director and CEO
Janice Hayes

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Meir Revivo – Manager, Information Technology and Facilities
Sherry Shen – Manager, Finance and Accounting
Cristina Umana – Manager, HR and Administration

Thank you to the almost 60 staff members who provide:
• information and referral to our 211 callers
• data and information resources
• technical and facility services
• training
• online and print publications
• administrative services