

Paula Kusack

Subject: FW: Agenda or Mail Distribution - FW: Provincial Crisis Lines in Jeopardy

From: Christine Mohr <christine.mohr@options.bc.ca>

Sent: November 12, 2021 5:34 PM

To: Mayor Val van den Broek <vvandenbroek@langleycity.ca>

Subject: Provincial Crisis Lines in Jeopardy



Mayor Val Van Den Broek
20399 Douglas Crescent
Langley, BC V3A 4B3

Dear Mayor Val Van Den Broek:

Re: Provincial Crisis Lines in Jeopardy

We are writing to inform you that our 1-800-SUICIDE, 310-6789 Mental Health line, and local crisis lines are in jeopardy.

After almost a decade of working closely with the Province to ensure crisis lines can provide skilled and effective 24/7 crisis service for all British Columbians, the Province has decided to dramatically increase funding and centralize the technology to allow all Crisis Centres across the province to support one another's call. That is the good news.

There is also bad news. Because funding will be increasing, the Province has informed the current Crisis Line Network that they will put all crisis line services to competitive bid through a Request for Proposals (RFP). This means Crisis Centres across the province will be preparing proposals to bid on the contracts we have historically held, at a time when demand on our services is at an all-time high.

As of January 2021, the Fraser Health Crisis Line (FHCL), operated by Options Community Services Society, celebrated 50 years of serving the Fraser Health region of Burnaby to Boston Bar. This Crisis Line is integrated with the Fraser Health Authority as a formal component of Fraser Health's response to the Opioid Crisis, partnered with the Fraser Health Substance Use Services Access Team to connect clients to specialized services and resources.

According to a report from the BC Coroners Service on the Illicit Drug Toxicity Deaths in BC, there were 1,204 suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths between January and July 2021. The confidentiality of the FHCL service is an important resource that can reach community members through the stigma of drug use and the barriers to seeking help. The Crisis Line equips volunteers with training in harm-reduction to engage callers about safer drug use (where appropriate) in order to keep them safe until they are prepared to make larger steps towards their recovery.

The FHCL also completes outreach calls to clients on behalf of clinicians across all Fraser Health Mental Health Substance Use (MHSU) programs, and provides an aligned response to clients closely connected to MHSU services using access to Fraser Health client files. During the 2020-21 fiscal year, the FHCL completed 276 outreach calls on behalf of Fraser Health clinicians.

This level of integration has created pathways that have allowed Fraser Health to further leverage the Crisis Line service, and provide support to vulnerable clients during the 2021 summer heatwave.

Collectively, Crisis Centres, run by non-profit organizations across the Province, have worked tirelessly to support one another's operations through sharing expertise, practices, problem-solving and most importantly, to support one another with backup to ensure that callers receive services when they reach out in despair.

We are deeply concerned that our collective work over many years is at risk of significant disruption and could be lost altogether, in the event that services are taken over by one or multiple provider(s) that are not integrated at the community level or with each other as service providers.

Additionally, most of the existing Crisis Centre providers make heavy use of trained, skilled volunteers backed with staff support. In the case of the Fraser Health Crisis Line, delivered by Options Community Services Society, volunteers provided 24,769 hours valued at \$702,200 this year alone in Fraser Valley communities (see Key Statistics). This is not a one-way exchange, as the highly regarded training and experience that volunteers receive provide them with valuable and generalizable skills that they then bring back to the communities they serve now

and moving forward.

As Crisis Centres, we are keenly aware of the importance of responding to the record-breaking number of British Columbians, including your constituents, who need us to answer their call when they are in distress. We are strong, experienced, well connected, and best situated to continue to grow with our communities.

We request you formally engage the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the Minister of Health to stop the ongoing process to put these crisis services out to tender, potentially disrupting and potentially jeopardizing ongoing access to crisis services.

Additional information has been included in this letter, and we invite you to reach out to us. We serve the same folks you represent. Their lives matter. Their wellbeing is our top priority.

Sincerely,



Christine Mohr
Chief Executive Officer
604.782.9507 (cell)
christine.mohr@options.bc.ca

The Fraser Health Crisis Line is a member of the BC Crisis Line Network and the Crisis Line Association of BC.



Fraser Health Crisis Line
(Operated by Options Community Services Society* for 50 years)

Key Statistics (Fiscal Year** 2020-2021)

- Total # of volunteer hours: [24,769](#)
- Volunteer hours valued if paid: [\\$22.68/hour, plus benefits = \\$702,200](#)
- Paid call-taker wage starts at Grid 10 (BCGEU Grid): [\\$21.63/\\$22.68/\\$23.90/\\$25.19, plus benefits](#)
- Total # of calls answered: [54,913](#)
- Total # of minutes of call support provided: [947,817](#)
- Total # of suicide-related calls 2619/54913 = .047 x 100: [4.7%](#)
- Total # of applicants accepted into the training program: [242](#)
- Outreach calls to clients on behalf of Fraser Health Mental Health Substance Use Services: [276](#)
- Warm Transfers to Fraser Health Substance Use Services Access Team: [87](#)

During this current fiscal year (2021-2022), more than [60 volunteers](#) received letters of reference for entry into graduate programs (i.e., social work, counselling and medical school). Many Crisis Line volunteers become first responders and other helping professionals.

For information on the [Fraser Health Crisis Line](#), contact:

Thaddée Bergler
 Program Manager, Fraser Health Crisis Line
[Options Community Services Society](#)
thaddee.bergler@options.bc.ca
 604.584.5811 ext.11309



LOCAL

604.951.8855

TOLL FREE

1.877.820.7444

*OPTIONS: Services to Communities Society and Surrey Community Services Society merged to form Options Community Services Society in April 2009. The two agencies have been serving the community since 1973 and 1971 respectively.

**Fiscal Year is April 1st to March 31st

BC Crisis Line Network Advocacy Letter



Request for Proposal Process - Provincial Crisis Lines

Members of the BC Crisis Line Network have worked collaboratively and tirelessly to provide lifesaving crisis de-escalation services, suicide risk assessments, and strengths-based collaborative safety planning and follow-up to vulnerable British Columbians across the province.

Crisis lines are a highly integrated component of the various mental health services within the regional health authorities. We partner with local responders to provide after-hours support to the community, conduct outreach calls through the opioid crisis program, and provide suicide prevention training to emergency services, front line workers, and youth.

At this juncture, the BC Crisis Line Network welcomes the province's recent decision to dramatically increase funding and centralize processes to ensure that we are meeting the increased demand for our services. However, the current move to initiate a competitive bidding process will only result in significant delays and would detract from our ability to deliver much needed services and supports. This move also raises the possibility of privatizing crisis services across the province.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put incredible pressure on crisis services. To accommodate the significant rise in demand, our organizations have taken the necessary steps to ramp up services by improving our IT infrastructure and looking for efficiencies across the board. During this difficult time, we were able to play a critical role in responding to the increased demand and significantly reducing pressure off the policing and acute sectors. Today, our crisis centres continue to receive an average of 50% more calls compared to pre-pandemic call volumes.

The BC Government's plans to put crisis centre contracts out for tender is the wrong approach, and comes at the wrong time. At this critical time, and in the middle of a mental health and addictions crisis, we cannot lose any of the progress we've made so far. Our focus needs to be on leveraging our years of experience to expand our existing high-quality services, rather than on diverting capacity and much needed resources to a lengthy RFP process.

Lives are at stake and the numbers speak for that. We need increased funding, and we need it now.

BC Crisis Line Network's 2020/21 Impact

On the Community









- Provided 2.5 million minutes of life-saving and life-changing support.



- Saved British Columbian taxpayers approximately \$10.4 million and significantly reduced stress on police and hospital services during the pandemic by diverting 7,099 interventions from 911, 16,251 interventions by in-person Crisis Response Teams, and 50,901 emergency Mental Health Worker engagements.
- Safely de-escalated 99.5% of all calls through strengths-based collaborative safety planning and follow-up support aligned with internationally recognized better practices.
- Supported 2,283 opioid-related calls, over 6,000 addiction contacts and close to 18,000 calls where suicide was the primary concern.

On Labour

- Provided jobs for over 110 staff members and opportunities for over 550 volunteers, many of whom go on to become our doctors, teachers, social workers, police, and other emergency and mental health professionals.

<p>Vancouver Coastal Health</p>	 Located in Vancouver	 Located in Richmond	
<p>Island Health</p>	 Located in Nanaimo		
<p>Fraser Health</p>	 Located in Surrey		
<p>Northern Health</p>	 Located in Prince George		
<p>Interior Health</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">INTERIOR CRISIS LINE</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="625 1297 852 1360">  Canadian Mental Health Association <i>Mental health for all</i> </div> <div data-bbox="933 1297 1112 1360">  KCR COMMUNITY RESOURCES </div> <div data-bbox="1193 1287 1320 1360">  </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div data-bbox="581 1388 860 1434"> Located in Cranbrook, Vernon, Williams Lake </div> <div data-bbox="914 1388 1092 1413"> Located in Kelowna </div> <div data-bbox="1177 1388 1320 1413"> Located in Trail </div> </div>		

Christine Mohr

9815 - 140 Street, Surrey, V3T4M4

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