



## **Media Release**

### **Heat and fire lead to increased calls to BC Crisis Line Network**

Heat and the threat of wildfires are causing British Columbians increased anxiety and worry, leading to more calls being made to 1-800-SUICIDE and the province-wide mental health support line, 310-6789.

“Calls to the mental health crisis line and suicide intervention line increase during heatwaves,” says Asha Croggon of the BC Crisis Line Network. “We saw an increase last year during the heat dome and the devastating wildfires, and we are seeing it happen again this year. Depending on the severity and intensity of the situation, increases are between 10 to 25 per cent, depending on the region. This is in addition to the increased call volume and complexity of calls since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Rural and remote communities are especially impacted by the recurring threats from heatwaves and wildfires as they try to cope with the trauma caused by last year’s wildfire that ravaged the Village of Lytton and other areas of BC. The support provided by crisis lines to these communities is crucial.

During extreme weather events, people reach out to crisis lines to navigate their mental health because these events can be a tipping point in people’s wellness. “People feel more isolated, anxious, and overwhelmed. They’re feeling frayed, and climate change issues feel so much bigger than what they can take on, so their resources and coping strategies are shrinking, and relationships are feeling the strain,” Croggon explains. “The biggest resource crisis lines provide is listening, which might seem passive but being truly heard can de-escalate the situation and then we can work collaboratively with the caller to create a self-care plan.” Depending on the caller’s location, crisis line responders are also preparing the callers for upcoming evacuation notices and supporting them through their evacuation plan if a notice was already issued.

Crisis line volunteers and staff responders are under significant pressure from the increases in call volume and complexity, as well as going through the challenges of the pandemic, wildfires and the extreme weather events themselves. “We have an approach within crisis lines: How we do something is just as important as what we do. If our own people are burning out tending to the wellness and safety of others, then we are working at cross purposes with our mission,” says Croggon. BC crisis lines have initiated additional counselling support for volunteers and staff, as well as debriefing and training opportunities, and volunteers and staff are encouraged to take breaks whenever they are needed.

“There are many reasons why people reach out to crisis lines - we’re always grateful that they do.” Whether you are struggling with issues related to the current heat or wildfires in BC, crisis lines are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The BC Crisis Line Network, comprised of 10 local crisis centres from around BC, answers calls to 1-800-SUICIDE, 310-6789 Mental Health, and regional distress lines. The centres provide lifesaving crisis de-escalation services, suicide risk assessment, and strengths-based collaborative safety planning and follow-up.

**AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS**  
**BC CRISIS LINE NETWORK**

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**BC CRISIS LINE NETWORK**  
Strengthening Communities. Saving Lives

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 <p><b>Crisis Centre</b></p>	 <p><b>ICLN</b> Interior Crisis Line Network 1.888.353.CARE (2273)</p>	 <p><b>Crisis Prevention, Intervention &amp; Information Centre</b> FOR NORTHERN BC</p>
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