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Jody Paterson, Executive Director of Board Voice Society of BC

Dear Jody Paterson

Thank you for your email of October 5, 2021, regarding the Province's Crisis Line Enhancement Project.

Thank you for advocating for crisis lines and the invaluable services they provide for people in our province. Based on feedback we heard from our meetings with the crisis line network and service providers, I am happy to report that government has asked the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) to contract directly with the existing crisis line providers. This will bring stability and improvements for the current non-profit service providers, and it means British Columbians will have expanded support, when and where they need it. We heard you and the existing crisis line operators say entering a competitive bid process would detract from providing crisis services during British Columbia's ongoing states of emergency, and together we found a better solution.

PHSA will now support, oversee, and coordinate crisis line services in BC through the Province's Crisis Line Enhancement Project. This project will increase crisis line capacity to respond to calls, improve recruitment and retention of staff, upgrade and improve technology, and standardize training for all call responders.

Crisis lines will continue to be offered in each region throughout the province as the PHSA works with the health authorities and the current 10 crisis line providers over the coming months to transition to a single service contract for each health authority. I'm grateful to the BC Crisis Line Network for proposing this approach. This will create a more coordinated provincial system and provide British Columbians with more sustainable and reliable crisis line services.

As this process continues, PHSA is committed to:

- Creating a service model that respects and honours volunteers and builds on strong community linkages;
- Working with non-profit providers to ensure they understand how the direct solicitation process has been designed;
- Ensuring that there are no reductions in staffing or service levels while this work is underway; and
- Establishing a system of care that is available for all British Columbians, when they need support most.

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To help crisis lines maintain service levels in the face of increasing demand, the Province has granted \$1.6 million in one-time COVID-19 surge funding to help service providers with capacity issues. Through the Crisis Line Enhancement Project, the Province has committed to investing an additional \$2.35 million in annual funding — nearly doubling the current investment in this critical service.

Unprecedented call volume increase over the past few years — a direct result of the toxic drug crisis and COVID-19 pandemic — means crisis lines have been challenged to keep up with demand. Meanwhile, flood and fire emergencies have increased the need for these services. I am grateful for the dedication and tireless work of crisis line workers, their efforts, and commitment save lives, and am pleased we are able to enhance support for our crisis lines through this work.

Thank you again for reaching out with your concerns. I look forward to implementing these innovative solutions to help the crisis line system grow while maintaining the availability of these lifesaving services throughout the province.

Best wishes,



Sheila Malcolmson  
Minister