

## MOTION

### 3. Supporting Crisis Centres Supporting Community Needs (Member's Motion B.4)

At the Council meeting on December 14, 2021 (reconvened from November 16, 2021), Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on January 26, 2022, in order to hear from speakers, followed by debate and decision.

MOVED by Councillor Fry

#### WHEREAS

1. BC's Crisis Line Network, a group of community-based non-profit crisis centres from across our province,<sup>1</sup> support lifesaving crisis de-escalation services, suicide risk assessment, and collaborative safety planning through specifically skilled and effective 24/7 crisis service responders: answering calls to 1-800-SUICIDE, 310-6789 Mental Health, and regional distress lines; providing employment opportunities and local crisis expertise in Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond, Nanaimo, Prince George, Kamloops, Kelowna, Trail, Cranbrook, and Williams Lake; and diverting calls from 911 and police-based mental health response;
2. To meet rising demand for crisis intervention, the Province announced a well-intentioned decision to increase funding and centralize call technology for BC's Crisis Line Network. As the result of this investment and in accordance with trade law however, the Province will now be obliged to open all crisis line services to competitive bid through a Request for Proposals (RFP). In the case of crisis calls, this raises the possibility of bids going to large, multinational, for-profit corporations and privatizing crisis services across the province, adding: privacy concerns; service quality concerns; impacts on labour and education; and potentially downloading service to local governments as at-risk callers are referred to 911 in order to reduce costs and corporate liability;
3. For-profit telemedicine counselling services are a rapidly-growing industry sector.<sup>2,3</sup> Notably, for-profit private corporations have professional teams to develop proposals to win contracts. Typically, non-profit crisis centres do not have access to the same resources to prepare competitive bids, and at a time when their core services are in greater demand than ever;
4. Crisis Lines are highly integrated in regional health authority mental health services, providing jobs for over 110 staff members and opportunities for over 550 volunteers. Over 450 students are trained each year as volunteer Crisis Line Responders in BC, many of whom go on to become doctors, teachers, social workers, and emergency and mental health professionals in our communities;
5. This year, across BC, Crisis Lines safely de-escalated 99.5% of their calls with over 2.5 million minutes of life-saving support, saving BC taxpayers approximately \$10.4 million and reducing stresses on police and hospital

services by diverting 7,099 interventions from 911; 16,251 interventions by in-person Crisis Response Teams; and 50,901 emergency Mental Health Worker engagements;

6. Vancouver City Council has consistently supported non-policing interventions for mental health issues where possible:
  - a. The Vancouver Crisis Centre de-escalated 19,129 mental health crisis and/or suicide-related calls (including VCH regional and 1800SUICIDE and 310 Mental Health calls) in 2019/20;
  - b. According to Vancouver Police Department's 2020 Our Community In Need <sup>4</sup> report, 13,592 of 265,000 police calls for service were mental health related. The report continues: "2,259 [Calls for Service] may or may not have required police attendance, which is the equivalent of 6 CFS/ day (VPD officers attend, on average, 727 CFS a day). These 2,259 CFS resulted in officers dedicating approximately 11,800 hours, and this equates to 8 officer positions (the cost of which is, \$1,051,935). Of note, there is no current program/community resource in existence that could have attended in lieu of police";
7. BC's Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act <sup>5</sup> acknowledges "the role of police with respect to complex social issues including mental health and wellness, addictions, and harm reduction; and in consideration of any appropriate changes to relevant sections of the Mental Health Act." The August 2020 Statement from the Special Committee further commits to follow-up with other ministries and independent offices, and seek input from advocacy groups, subject matter experts, and individuals with frontline experience in several related areas including mental health.

#### THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT The Mayor on behalf of Council write to Minister of Health, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training with a letter of support for funded local Crisis Centres supporting community needs that:
  - a. Acknowledges role of crisis centres in health and well being of residents;
  - b. Describes the importance of community-based local services;
  - c. Highlights the role of crisis centres in diverting 911 calls and police intervention;
  - d. Communicates concerns that privatized centralized crisis centres may result in an increased burden on 911 calls and police, and should be considered under the scope of the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act;
  - e. Distinguishes that local crisis centres provide important jobs and volunteer opportunities in the community, including valuable training for students in the medical, mental health, social work and protective services fields; and

- f. Encourages the province to pursue a funding and support model for BC crisis centre services that does not prejudice the process towards an open-bid RFP and recognizes the unique role and importance of BC's Crisis Line Network.
- B. THAT the following enactment along with preamble clauses 1 and 2 above is submitted to the LMLGA for endorsement and consideration at the 2022 UBCM Convention, and a copy of the entire resolution be submitted directly the UBCM Health and Social Development Committee for immediate consideration.

Therefore be it resolved that the UBCM urge the Province to pursue a funding and support model for crisis centre services that that does not prejudice the process towards an open-bid RFP and recognizes the unique role and importance of BC's Crisis Line Network, providing local community-based services for vulnerable British Columbians, diverting 911 calls and police intervention, and encourages local employment, training, and volunteer opportunities in communities across BC.

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1. BC Crisis Line Network: Crisis Centre of BC (Vancouver), CHIMO Crisis Lines (Richmond), Fraser Health Crisis Line/Options (Surrey), CMHA for the Kootenays (Cranbrook), Kelowna Community Resources (Kelowna), Trail F.A.I.R. (Trail), CMHA Vernon (Vernon), CMHA Cariboo Chilcotin (Williams Lake), Vancouver Island Crisis Society (Nanaimo), Northern BC Crisis Line (Prince George).
  2. Telemedicine for treating mental health and substance use disorders: reflections since the pandemic  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41386-021-00960-4>
  3. Morneau Shepell reports 2021 first quarter financial results  
"a strong quarter to start the year driven by accelerating growth of our technology-enabled product suite, increased uptake of Total Wellbeing, adoption of digital mental health solutions and additional services added to our platform such as telemedicine."  
<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210513005792/en/Morneau-Shepell-reports-2021-first-quarter-financial-results>
  4. VPD: Our Community in Need  
<https://vpd.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/our-community-in-need.pdf>
  5. BC Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act  
<https://www.leg.bc.ca/parliamentary-business/committees/41stParliament-5thSession-rpa>

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