



**24 Hour Distress Line**  
604-872-3311  
Toll Free: 1-866-661-3311

**Web-Based Hotline for Youth**  
[www.youthinbc.com](http://www.youthinbc.com)

**Community Education**  
604-872-1811

For Immediate Release  
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## News Release

### **Crisis Centre Announces Seniors Suicide Prevention Project** **Response to drastic increase in calls from seniors over last five years**

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Canada – Marking World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10<sup>th</sup>, the Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention Centre of BC announces a new suicide prevention project aimed to help seniors in distress.

Canadian seniors have among the highest suicide rates in the country. Men over the age of 85 have the highest rate of completed suicide rates of all age groups in Canada. Physical health problems, loss of independence, a shrinking circle of friends, and financial problems often occur in older age and have been associated with an increased risk for stress, depression and suicide. The progressive aging of the Canadian population suggests that both the numbers and volume of suicide rates amongst older Canadians can be expected to increase as a consequence of the cumulative effects of longer life expectancy, pressure on health resources and an increased fraction of the older population with physical illness & disabilities.

The Crisis Centre's distress line calls from people over 55 years of age have increased from 6% to 17.5% over the last five years. In 2007, the Crisis Centre received over 4,000 calls from seniors; 38% related to mental health issues, 28% to loneliness and social isolation, and 3% to suicide.

In response to the drastic increase in calls for help from seniors in distress, the Crisis Centre has created a "Connecting with Seniors" project that encourages more seniors to become volunteers as well as improving its distress phone services to help more seniors in need. Created for seniors by seniors, the pilot project began with the creation of a Seniors Advisory Council earlier this year. It aims to increase the number of age 55+ volunteers to better provide peer support to the increasing number of seniors calling in crisis. Research is already underway to identify, document and publish best practices in dealing with seniors in crisis. An awareness campaign to ensure seniors can better access the support services available to them is being planned for 2009. Other initiatives include a partnership with the West End Seniors Network to develop stronger training programs so that volunteers are better able to meet the specific needs of seniors.

"In recent years we have largely focused our efforts on youth suicide prevention, through the delivery of classroom workshops in high schools and the launch of our web-based hotline, YouthInBC.com," said Crisis Centre Executive Director Ian Ross. "But our research has shown that with changing demographics and the specific stresses that often arise with aging, seniors are also at an increased risk for suicide. Through this project we hope to better understand depression and suicide amongst older adults, and position the Crisis Centre to better respond to their unique needs."

**About the Crisis Centre** Since 1969, the Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention Centre of BC (Crisis Centre) has provided caring emotional support to youth, adults, and seniors in distress. As a safe place to turn to when there seems to be no hope, the Crisis Centre is operated by 280+ front line volunteers and a small team of professional staff who support and empower troubled individuals to see their own strengths and options, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As an award-winning organization, the Crisis Centre has been a pioneer in the industry by offering a comprehensive range of leading-edge programs that are evidence-based and utilize best practices. In 2007, the Crisis Centre impacted more than 47,000 lives across BC through its 24/7 Distress Services, Web-based Hotline for Youth ([www.youthinbc.com](http://www.youthinbc.com)), and Youth Suicide Prevention & Stress Management Workshops. For more information, please visit [www.crisiscentre.bc.ca](http://www.crisiscentre.bc.ca).

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