



**Richmond  
Youth Service  
Agency**

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[www.rysa.bc.ca](http://www.rysa.bc.ca)

**Re: Wireless Charges for Help and Crisis Lines**

**Attn: John Lawford, Executive Director**

Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
ONE Nicholas Street, Suite 1204  
Ottawa, ON  
K1N 7B7

Dear Mr. Lawford:

Richmond Youth Service Agency greatly supports the initiative to make wireless calls to Canadian Crisis and Help Lines free. As an agency that serves youth, we regularly provide youth with Help and Crisis Line numbers for them to use after hours if they are in need of assistance. Many of our youth have pay-as-you-go phone plans and run out of minutes very quickly. Knowing they can access help after office hours and not having to worry about data rates is extremely important and would increase the likelihood that they would call for support if needed.

The other issue of importance is confidentiality around these calls, that the phone call not be logged as a crisis or help line on the bill. For some of our youth their parents pay the phone bill and would be reluctant to access help if their parents were aware of the phone call.

Our agency also works with unemployed adults and seniors. Unemployment is one of the five highest stressful transitions in adult life. This population would also greatly benefit from being able to access crisis and help lines from their cellular phones without charges. Money is extremely limited for these clients and being able to call a crisis line such as Richmond's Chimo Crisis Line without the added stress of it costing them money they do not have would be wonderful.

If our agency can help with this initiative further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Daylene Marshall  
Manager of Special Projects  
Richmond Youth Service Agency  
[Daylene.marshall@rysa.bc.ca](mailto:Daylene.marshall@rysa.bc.ca)  
604-271-7600 Ext 125

January 6, 2014

John Lawford

Executive Director

Public Interest Advocacy Centre

ONE Nicholas Street, Suite 1204

Ottawa ON, K1N 7B7

Dear Mr. Lawford

Safe Communities Cranbrook Committee is proud to be working together to promote safety for our citizens. Our main three objectives are the reduction of injury and death cause by transportation accidents, suicides and falls.

We recently signed an agreement to join the Association of Community Response Networks (BC CRNs). This agreement uses our established committee to work toward creating a coordinated community response to adult abuse, neglect and self-neglect.

Our committee of 18 local organizations works as a team and is a member of our national organization, Parachute.

**Free access to all help lines and crisis lines is important to the citizens we serve.**

**We welcome this opportunity to advocate for this service, as we are keenly aware of the importance of personalized, early access to supports and services through the work done by our agencies and their programs.**

Cranbrook is often called the “Key City” because many services are located here, serving the 80,000 residents of our East Kootenay region. Our help lines and crisis lines are important resources for these residents.

Cranbrook is linked through wireless to all communities in our region but it is so important to provide not only online linking. Human contact for persons needing support, advice and direction is critical to successful contact. This is especially true for those who are elderly, very young, or very stressed. And it is vital to those with emotional and mental health concerns. When we answer our phones, we often hear, “Thank goodness! A real person!”.

For more information about our organization and the work we are doing in Cranbrook, please contact:

Gail Brown, Chairperson, Safe Communities Cranbrook

428 15 Ave. S. Cranbrook, BC V1C 2Y9

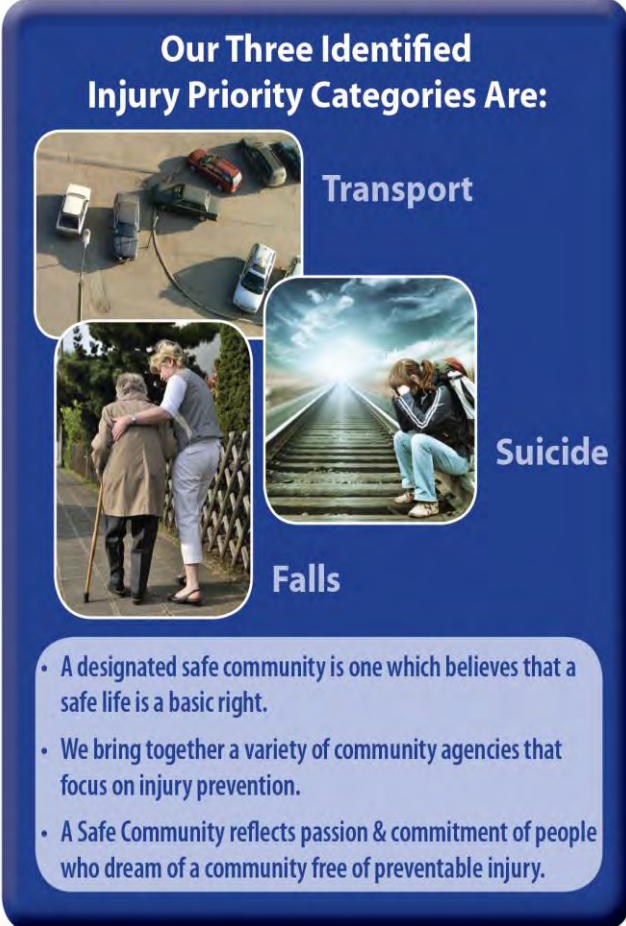
Phone: 250 919-4339

Email: groo.brown@gmail.com

### **Member Organizations**

- **East Kootenay Child Care Resource & Referral Program**
- **Cranbrook Society for Community Living**
- **ANKORS**
- **East Kootenay Children First**
- **Better At Home Program**
- **Community Connections Society of SE BC**
- **Cranbrook Community Response Network**

**Our Three Identified Injury Priority Categories Are:**



**Transport**

**Falls**

**Suicide**

- A designated safe community is one which believes that a safe life is a basic right.
- We bring together a variety of community agencies that focus on injury prevention.
- A Safe Community reflects passion & commitment of people who dream of a community free of preventable injury.



Office of the Chief  
Medical Health Officer

800, 601 West Broadway  
Vancouver, BC  
V5Z 4C2

John Lawford  
Executive Director  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
ONE Nicholas Street, Suite 1204  
Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7

Dear Mr. Lawford:

I am writing to you in my role as Chief Medical Health Officer and Vice President of Public Health for Vancouver Coastal Health. Vancouver Coastal Health is responsible for the delivery of community, hospital and residential care to more than one million people in communities including Richmond, Vancouver, North Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast, the Sea to Sky corridor, Powell River and the Central Coast area of BC.

A central mandate of our work is to reduce health inequities in the populations we serve. We know some of our populations and communities have poorer health status than others. One of our goals as a health authority is to improve access to health care, especially preventive care, for populations who experience barriers to accessing these important services.

It has come to my attention that access to help line services that are made available to support health care delivery and prevention, may be impeded due to costs associated with cell phone use. A recent example that came to my attention was the peri-natal depression line that is an important service to support new mothers and prevent potential mental health issues. There appears to be an emerging issue in relation to help lines generally in that using a land line may be toll free but the same call on a cell phone may incur costs for the person requiring the service. These expenses could discourage callers from taking advantage of the service.

I understand that the Public Interest Advocacy Centre has an interest in supporting consumers in relation to the services provided by telecommunications companies. I want to raise this issue with you as it is an area of concern that you might wish to explore and perhaps discuss within the telecommunications advocacy work that you do. There may be a simple solution such as allowing help lines that are part of an established health care program to register their phone numbers in order to allow cell phone callers to avoid charges. Any effort you can put into exploring this issue would be appreciated.

If you have any questions about this concern please feel free to contact our Executive Director of Population Health Ted Bruce at [ted.bruce@vch.ca](mailto:ted.bruce@vch.ca).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patricia Daly".

Patricia Daly, MD, FRCPC  
Vice-President, Public Health and Chief Medical Health Officer  
Vancouver Coastal Health





women against violence  
against women

www.wavaw.ca  
24 hour crisis line:  
604-255-6344 1-877-392-7583

December 10, 2013

Attn: John Lawford  
Executive Director  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
ONE Nicholas Street, Suite 1204  
Ottawa, ON  
K1N 7B7  
lawford@piac.ca

**RE: Support to Public Interest Advocacy Centre's concerns, Charges for wireless calls to Canadian help lines and crisis lines (Women Against Violence Against Women Rape Crisis Centre - WAVAW)**

Dear Mr. Lawford,

On behalf of Women Against Violence Against Women Rape Crisis Centre (WAVAW) I am writing to support Public Interest Advocacy Centre's concerns about crisis line and 1-800 calling through cellular phones. WAVAW expresses similar concerns about the expenses incurred by women in crisis using 1-800 crisis lines on their cellular phones, as well as confidentiality of crisis phone lines on cellular phone invoicing.

WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre works to end all forms of violence against women and has been supporting women and girls who have been hurt by sexual assault for the past 30 years. Our services include a 24-hour crisis line; support groups; one-to-one counselling; accompaniments for women to the hospital, court and police; public education; and culturally-proficient services for Aboriginal women and youth. Last year alone we offered over 6,000 direct services to women. WAVAW's 24-hour crisis line offers survivors of sexual violence a safe, free and confidential space to seek support.

As advocates for women, we are aware that two out of three Canadian women have experienced sexual assault<sup>1</sup>. Marginalized populations of women are more predominantly affected by sexual violence, and also experience more barriers – social, financial, and access – when reaching out for support<sup>2</sup>. Sexual violence against women is pervasive, and has serious implications. Supportive services that are accessible, free and safe are critical to reducing the impacts of violence against women in our communities.

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<sup>1</sup> METRAC. *Sexual Assault Statistics Sheet*. Online: <http://www.metrac.org/resources/downloads/sexual.assault.statistics.sheet.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Wolfe and Chiodo, CAMH, 2008, in *Safe Schools Action Team Report on Gender-based Violence, Homophobia, Sexual Harassment & Inappropriate Sexual Behavior in Schools*, 2008: 3

supporting survivors since 1982 • shifting society for the future

Delamont RPO, PO Box 29084, Vancouver BC V6J 5C2 604-255-6228

Charitable Registration Number: 89280 1365 RR0001

WAVAW supports the Public Interest Advocacy Centre's concerns about crisis line and 1- 800 calling through cellular phones. We ask to see the following changes:

- We ask for increased and concrete protection of confidentiality for 1-800 number callers. When the caller dials a 1-800 number from her cellular phone, this number should not appear on her bill for reasons related both confidentiality and safety
- We ask that 1-800 and other crisis lines are anonymous for all callers who call rape crisis lines, woman abuse lines and related help lines
- We ask that 1-800 lines are consistently free of charge on callers' cellular phones. In fact, the cost of the call is already covered by the provider of the 1-800 line and so there is no reason why the caller ought to incur costs
- While it is an option that incurs less cost, we do not see text messaging to be a viable alternative to voice communication in the case of crisis and counselling support. While it is true that many populations of women use text to communicate overall, (1) text is not a suitable means of communication for the provision of crisis and counselling support. Crisis and counselling support can only be appropriately conveyed in complex dialogue. Women accessing 1-800 lines clearly seek voice (phone) communication; and (2) populations with limited literacy or text capacity, such as refugee, immigrant and women with disabilities, do not find text communication to be an accessible means of communication

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 604-255-6228 ext.229.

Sincerely,



Irene Tsepnopoulos-Elhaimer  
Executive Director  
WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre

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Delamont RPO, PO Box 29084, Vancouver BC V6J 5C2 604-255-6228

Charitable Registration Number: 89220 4386 RRCC01