



For immediate release

## **Bell launches national charitable initiative supporting mental health**

*Unprecedented investment addresses a pervasive yet underfunded health issue: mental illness*

*Bell's 4 action pillars: Anti-stigma, community care and access, workplace health, research*

*Clara Hughes announced as spokesperson for national Bell Let's Talk campaign*

OTTAWA, September 21, 2010 – Bell today announced the launch of an unprecedented, multi-year charitable program to support mental health across Canada. Practically addressing a pressing national health concern, mental illness, Bell's five-year, \$50 million initiative supports an extensive range of programs to enhance mental health in every aspect of Canadian life.

"Mental illness impacts every person in Canada in some way, causes immense personal suffering and takes a heavy toll on our national economy. The health care community has worked hard to address the impact of mental illness, but public understanding of the disease remains low and mental health support needs to accelerate," said George Cope, President and CEO of Bell and BCE.

"Bell will work to reduce the stigma still associated with mental illness while enabling practical programs supporting new research and improved access to mental health care. Mental illness affects our society more than any other major disease yet receives less funding than almost any other. Bell's mental health initiative is dedicated to addressing the problem," said Mr. Cope.

In its 130 years serving Canadians, Bell and its team have made substantial investments in communities and charities across the country, and will continue to support a range of charitable initiatives with money, services and volunteer time. However, Bell's prime community investment focus and the majority of its charitable spending will be dedicated to the promotion and support of mental health across Canada.

### **Bell Let's Talk**

"Too few people suffering from mental illness get the help they need, reflecting a clear reluctance to recognize and talk about the issue on the part of too many. That stigma is a barrier to treatment," said Mr. Cope. "Stigma surrounded many diseases in the past, but concerted efforts to face the reality of intensely personal illnesses changed attitudes – and positively changed outcomes for sufferers. To drive real progress in mental health, Bell has made reducing stigma the first pillar of our program. We're launching a campaign called Bell Let's Talk to open the national conversation, with a true Canadian leader at its centre: Olympian Clara Hughes."

"As someone who has come to know people of all kinds in every corner of the country, I have seen the prevalence and the dramatic impact of mental illness on Canadians. And I've seen how much access to mental health care and support means to those who suffer," said Ms. Hughes, Canada's six-time Olympic Medalist and an Officer of the Order of Canada. "I'm gratified at the chance to take a leading role in the Bell Let's Talk campaign, which will bring the mental health discussion to the forefront. Talking about mental illness is the first and best step in ensuring improved mental health in Canada."

Bell also announced Bell Let's Talk Day, which will work to raise awareness about mental health across Canada each year. The first Bell Let's Talk Day is set for February 9, 2011. For every text message sent and every long distance call made by Bell customers that day, Bell will donate 5 cents to programs dedicated to mental health.



The facts of mental illness and its impact on Canadians are startling:

- At least one in five Canadians experiences a form of mental illness at some point in their lives – every one of us has a family member, friend or colleague who will experience mental illness
- Mental health funding is modest relative to other health care issues – mental illness represents 15% of Canada's health care burden but receives only 5% of health care funding
- Just one-third of Canadians who need mental health services actually receive them.
- Mental illness is the number one cause of workplace disability in Canada – accounting for 30% of disability claims and 70% of disability costs
- Mental illness costs the Canadian economy \$51 billion each year in lost productivity – every day, 500,000 Canadians are absent from work due to a form of mental illness.

Bell's mental health initiative is being led by Mary Deacon, former CEO of the CAMH (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) Foundation and an acknowledged advocate for mental health in Canada.

"Bell is undertaking a broad and cross-functional approach to supporting mental health in Canada, funding improved access to care and ongoing research into the prevention and treatment of mental health issues. We are also eager to build on the efforts of other corporations by encouraging an enhanced focus on mental health promotion, understanding and support in the Canadian workplace," said Ms. Deacon, Chair of the Bell Mental Health Initiative. "Bell's well-funded and wide-ranging program recognizes the debilitating impacts of mental illness on families, communities and businesses, and works to positively contribute to the mental health of all Canadians."

### **Community Care and Access**

In cooperation with the Canadian health care community from coast to coast to coast, Bell will work to enhance access to mental health care with solutions ranging from local community support to telemedicine to improved hospital capabilities.

Bell today announced its first major hospital gift to the Royal Ottawa Hospital, one of Canada's top treatment and research facilities specializing in mental health care. Bell will donate \$1 million to expand and enhance the Royal Ottawa Telepsychiatry Program. Other mental health care institutions and organizations at the community and national level will also benefit from Bell's mental health initiative going forward.

Discussions are under way with several leading health care institutions across Canada and Bell will announce other major gifts in the near future. Bell will also launch a grant fund for smaller organizations looking to make a major impact in improving access to care in their communities, from coast to coast to coast, wherever a Bell or Bell Aliant company is connecting Canadians.

### **Workplace Health**

Bell will work with corporate Canada and the health care community to develop and adopt mental health best practices in the workplace. That includes enhanced and easy access to mental health information for employees, advanced return-to-work programs and the creation of an overall culture of mental health support across the Canadian business landscape. At Bell for example, every senior leader will participate in new training and information programs to accelerate understanding of and action around mental health issues.



### **Research**

To support research into better mental health understanding, prevention and treatment, Bell will invest in best-in-class research programs at hospitals, universities and other institutions across Canada – with a truly national scope and a commitment to supporting the best researchers wherever they work. Bell's support for strategic research into mental illness and health care solutions will include new research chairs, fellowships and project grants on an invitational basis.

### **About Bell**

Bell is Canada's largest communications company, providing consumers and business with solutions to all their communications needs, including Bell Mobility wireless, high-speed Bell Internet, Bell TV direct-to-home satellite television and Bell Fibe TV, Bell Home phone local and long distance, and IP-broadband and information and communications technology (ICT) services.

Bell was proud to be a Premier National Partner and the exclusive Telecommunications Partner to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympics Winter Games. Bell is wholly owned by BCE Inc. (TSX, NYSE: BCE). For information on Bell's products and services, please visit [www.bell.ca](http://www.bell.ca). For corporate information on BCE, please visit [www.bce.ca](http://www.bce.ca).

- 30 -

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