



NEWS RELEASE

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Distress Centres recognize the Social Impact of the Economic Crisis

TORONTO - As Statistic Canada announces a 7.7% unemployment rate in Canada, and the loss of a further 83,000 jobs, Distress Centres throughout the province continue to support families and individuals made vulnerable by job losses and the downturn in Canada's economic fortunes.

Distress Centres (DCs) have been seeing the impact of significant job losses and the spiralling economic conditions for many months. As providers of confidential and anonymous telephone support to people in distress and crisis throughout Ontario, volunteers have been hearing about the stress, shame and sense of loss that is plaguing many Ontarians.

In regions where manufacturing and specifically the auto sector are primary employers, call volumes have increased. Durham region experienced a 12% increase in calls in 2008 that paralleled the economic downturn. Even more startling, the calls to the Windsor Distress Centre have doubled over the same period last year; the calls received in January 2009 were twice the volumes from January 2008.

At the Distress Centre Peel, there was a 25.5% increase in calls relating to unemployment, employment and financial problems and 22% more men are calling than in previous years. Callers throughout the province are talking more about their unemployment, fear of job losses and its impact.

"Distress Centres throughout the province are experiencing an increase in callers talking about their own job loss or the job loss of a spouse, friend or co-worker" says Elizabeth Fisk, Executive Director of Distress Centres. "Reports from our centres throughout the province signal that callers are in deeper crisis, feeling lost and hopeless and some even contemplating suicide who have not felt that way before"

A long time support for people feeling crisis, Distress Centres help their callers recognize the grieving process associated with job loss. It is important to acknowledge that loss doesn't happen in isolation, it often leads to further losses in one's sense of self and identity. Callers, who do not initially speak of unemployment tensions, speak about an increase in substance abuse, family conflicts and abuse. Upon further probing, callers often acknowledge that fear of job losses or actual job losses lead to deeper problems in their family units.

Distress Centres help callers in many ways. Through empathic listening and referrals to other service providers who can provide practical tools, Distress Centres help callers make the journey. “It is not about giving advice,” says Fisk, “it is about helping callers navigate this frightening change in their lives. We offer emotional support to people who need to share their fears, sadness and anger. We prevent crisis by offering support and encouragement for the entire family that is affected.”

“We are expecting an even further increase in our call volumes as the spring approaches” says Fisk. “Canada’s economic indicators are lagging behind those in the US by about six months. The depth of the crisis and the volume of calls will be accelerating and as a free and confidential service, more individuals and families will be turning to Distress Centres. The need for our services will increase.”

To receive further statistics on the volume and types of calls received by Distress Centres, or the social impacts of the economic crisis, please contact DCO.

For more information on Distress Centres, visit www.dcontario.org

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