



Workplace-Based Suicide Prevention Campaign Proposed As Part of National Effort to Reduce Suicides in Canada by Two-Thirds Over Next Decade

“Child Abuse is a capital crime when it figures into the suicide of a child and should be treated as such by our courts.” – Bill Wilkerson, Co-Founder, Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health

CALGARY, Alberta, March 7, 2012- The House of Commons recently gave 2nd reading to a private members’ bill creating a ‘national framework for suicide prevention’ in Canada – engaging the federal government in suicide prevention for the first time – and this sets the stage for a national campaign to reduce suicides by two-thirds over the next ten years.

This is the message delivered at a Calgary suicide prevention symposium by Bill Wilkerson, Co-Founder of the Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health and Addiction and which issued its final report last December.

Wilkerson called upon the Federal Government to provide ten years of ‘coordination funding’ through the creation of a national suicide prevention bank which would support concrete initiatives to save lives and prevent injuries associated with suicide.

Wilkerson told a conference co-hosted by the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research and the Centre for Suicide Prevention that a decade-long campaign could save 31,000 lives and prevent more than 200,000 injuries by reducing the suicide complete and attempt rate by two thirds.

Alberta has the fifth highest rate of suicide in Canada among the 10 provinces and two territories with 16.6 suicides per 100,000 population compared to the national average of 14.0. Suicides in Canada exceed the US by 40 per cent on this basis.

Wilkerson noted that since the Alberta Suicide Prevention Plan was introduced in 2005, another 3,262 people in the province have died from suicide and at present rates, over the next ten years, 40,000 Canadians – ten percent of those children

Wilkerson:

- Proposed that places of work become venues for the prevention of suicide through education, information and training in the observation of emotional distress, withdrawal and changes in behavioral patterns among employees.
- Unveiled Guidelines for Working Parents to Protect Their Children Against Suicide and at the top of the list was the need for parents to disabuse themselves of the myths of mental illness and to become informed on how to handle their child’s interest in death.
- Proposed that workplaces work with schools to create parent/teacher alliances in the fight against suicide and creation of a Peace Corps of young people to support friends, classmates and siblings, mirroring the concept of peer support in the adult workplace
- Described child abuse as a contributing factor in the suicides of children even as adducts and should be treated as a ‘capital crime’ in our courts when the link is established.

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