



**For immediate release**

**Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk: A journey around Canada to grow the mental health conversation like never before**

- Six-time Olympian Clara Hughes to ride her bike coast to coast to coast to talk about mental health with schools and community organizations in every province and territory
- Starting next March 2014, Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk will span more than 100 days and 12,000 kilometres – concluding in Ottawa on Canada Day 2014
- Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk is supported by leading mental health organizations and National Partners BMO, Canadian Tire, Samsung and CTV

GATINEAU, Québec, April 25, 2013 – Bell today announced Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk, a national bicycle tour by Clara Hughes in support of mental health that begins in March 2014 and spans more than 100 days, 12,000 kilometres and every province and territory of Canada. The ride culminates on Canada Day, July 1 2014, in Ottawa.

Canada's six-time Olympic cycling and speed-skating medallist and national spokesperson for the Bell Let's Talk mental health initiative, Clara will invite people in communities around the country to the mental health discussion, sharing her own story of a struggle with depression during her athletic career.

"I'm incredibly excited about bringing even more Canadians into the Bell Let's Talk conversation – the schools, community groups and hometown champions that are really moving mental health forward," said Clara. "I'm looking forward to meeting people across Canada, hearing about their challenges and successes, sharing our stories and embracing new ideas and opportunities in mental health. I can't think of a better way to meet people, from the cities to the coasts to Canada's North, than getting on my bike and taking to the roads of this beautiful country."

"Mental health and wellness requires the combined efforts of governments, communities, corporations and individuals," said Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health. "We commend Bell Canada and Clara Hughes for their commitment to engaging Canadians in conversations and helping to create communities of compassion and awareness."

"Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk will grow the conversation about mental health like never before while highlighting community mental health organizations in every part of Canada," said George Cope, President and CEO of Bell and BCE Inc. "We've made significant strides in the fight against the stigma with Bell Let's Talk Day and major progress in funding new care, research and workplace initiatives. As a tireless champion of mental health, Clara is building on that momentum and taking the cause to a whole new level."

Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk is supported by Canada's leading mental health organizations, including Agir contre la maladie mentale (AMI-Québec), Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, Canadian Mental Health Association, and Fondation des maladies mentales. Bell Let's Talk is also proud to announce BMO, Canadian Tire, Samsung and CTV as the first National Partners of Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk.



The Ride will be a catalyst for new events, partnerships and fundraising – where every dollar stays in the community for local mental health initiatives. It will reach more than 60% of the Canadian population, including all three Northern territories. Plans are underway to engage with local, regional and national organizations to create hundreds of community events.

“The response of Canadians to the Bell Let's Talk call to end the stigma of mental illness has been truly inspiring. And we've learned through the annual Bell Let's Talk Community Fund, which supports new local mental health projects each year, that amazing work is being undertaken at the grassroots level in every region of Canada,” said Mary Deacon, Chair of Bell Let's Talk. “Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk will broaden the conversation, spark new fundraising, awareness and engagement opportunities, and take us closer to ending the stigma with every kilometre Clara rides.”

“Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk will inspire Canadians to come together in a combined effort to address all mental illnesses,” said Dave Gallson, Co-Chair of the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health. “The truly inspiring nature of this campaign is that it is community focused and will involve all citizens, young and old, regardless of where they live or work. We congratulate everyone involved and encourage all Canadians to follow the Ride, participate in community events, and help make this a huge success.”

Making a difference includes bringing the next generation into the mental health conversation. Schools across the nation will have the opportunity to discuss with Clara new ideas to grow the conversation in their own communities. The Ride will also work with communities to develop their own Bell Let's Talk events, an unprecedented opportunity for local mental health groups to raise funds and awareness for their programs that are making a profoundly important difference in the lives of people in their communities.

### **Share in the ride at [Bell.ca/ClarasBigRide](http://Bell.ca/ClarasBigRide)**

Every Canadian can participate in Clara's Big Ride for Bell Let's Talk through community events and social media. For more information, please visit [Bell.ca/ClarasBigRide](http://Bell.ca/ClarasBigRide) or follow the latest Ride news on Facebook at [Facebook.com/BellLetsTalk](https://Facebook.com/BellLetsTalk) or on Twitter at [@Bell\\_LetsTalk](https://twitter.com/Bell_LetsTalk).

The Ride builds on the growing success of Bell Let's Talk Day, an annual event led by Clara that invites Canadians to join the conversation about mental illness, reducing the stigma while growing Bell's funding of mental health. Bell donates 5 cents to mental health for every text and long-distance call by Bell and Bell Aliant customers and every tweet and Facebook share of the Bell Let's Talk message.

This year, Canadians sent a total of 96.266.266 messages – resulting in an additional \$4,813,313.30 in Bell funding for mental health. With its initial \$50-million commitment and three successful Bell Let's Talk Days since 2011, Bell has now committed a total of \$62,043,289.30 to Canadian mental health.

The Bell Let's Talk initiative was launched in 2010 to drive action in mental health based on 4 pillars: Anti-stigma, care and access, research, and workplace best practices. To learn more about the largest-ever corporate commitment to Canadian mental health, please visit [Bell.ca/LetsTalk](http://Bell.ca/LetsTalk).



At least 1 in 5 Canadians will struggle with a mental illness in their lifetimes – and 2 out of 3 won't seek the help they need because of the stigma surrounding the disease. Mental illness impacts everyone in some way, and it's a health issue that costs the Canadian economy over \$51 billion every year. More than 500,000 people miss work each day because of a mental illness, and the impact in lost labour-market participation alone was an estimated \$20.7 billion in 2012.

### **About Bell**

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