



**TOWN OF BLACKFALDS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
ACTION CORRESPONDENCE**

MEETING DATE: June 14, 2021

SUBJECT: 988 Suicide Hotline

BACKGROUND:

On the May 25th Regular Council Meeting, Council received a request from MP Blaine Calkins Office to provide support for the 988 national suicide hotline proposal. Council requested more information on the proposal.

DISCUSSION:

The response received from MP Calkins Office is as follows:

Ultimately it will be up to the CRTC to decide which funding mechanism is used, but we are pushing for a model similar to the one used to fund 911. Currently the major telecoms charge a small percentage of use-based fee on individual users phone bills. For example the cost for 911 in Nova Scotia is approximately .43 cents a month per user. The price varies across Canada, province by province. In Alberta the fee is .44 cents a month.

The federal government has already indicated that they are setting money aside in this years federal budget, but they have not indicated how much.

The idea would be to incorporate all the of the existing services. People already working in call centres providing help would keep their jobs... The only change would be to the infrastructure that gets the calls to them.

So instead of dialing a 10-digit number or a 1-800 number, you would call 988 and the operator would direct your call to the appropriate agency in the appropriate location.

Not all districts have specific suicide hotline help, so for areas that don't currently have one, they would be handed by the national organizations in locations as close as possible. Some municipalities or regions only operate services during the day. When those services are closed, the calls would be redirected to a national service.

Attachments:

- *988 Hotline Support Letter*

May 12, 2021
Blackfalds, Alberta



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Town of Blackfalds
Box 200
5018 Waghorn Street
Blackfalds, Alberta
T0M 0J0

Dear Mayor and Council:

On December 11th, 2020, the House of Commons passed a motion introduced by Conservative MP Todd Doherty, through unanimous consent, to bring a national 3-digit suicide prevention hotline line to Canada.

That, given that the alarming rate of suicide in Canada constitutes a national health crisis, the House call on the government to take immediate action, in collaboration with our provinces, to establish a national suicide prevention hotline that consolidates all suicide crisis numbers into one easy to remember three-digit (988) hot- line that is accessible to all Canadians.

We're asking all municipalities across Canada to consider passing a motion similar, to the one below. In order to make 988 a reality, we must continue to put pressure on the government and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

The past year has been a challenging year. Lives and livelihoods have been lost. We have begun to see the devastating impacts that COVID has had, through isolation, on the mental health of Canadians. The rates of suicide continue to rise. As elected officials and as leaders, and especially during this period of difficulty as a nation, Canadians are counting on all of us to make a difference.

Please consider passing this motion as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Blaine Calkins'.

Blaine Calkins, MP
Red Deer – Lacombe

Enclosure (1)

Ottawa Constituency

Draft motion:

Support for 988 Crisis Line

WHEREAS the Federal government has passed a motion to adopt 988, a National three-digit suicide and crisis hotline;

AND WHEREAS the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for suicide prevention services by 200 per cent;

AND WHEREAS existing suicide prevention hotlines require the user to remember a 10-digit number and go through directories or be placed on hold;

AND WHEREAS in 2022 the United States will have in place a national 988 crisis hotline;

AND WHEREAS _____ Town Council/Municipality/City recognizes that it is a significant and important initiative to ensure critical barriers are removed to those in a crisis and seeking help;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT _____ Town Council/Municipality/City endorses this 988 crisis line initiative;

and that Staff be directed to send a letter indicating such support to the local MP, MPP, Federal Minister of Health, the CRTC and local area municipalities to indicate our support.