

## Three-digit suicide and crisis hotline endorsed by Council

Aurora has joined calls for a three-digit nation-wide suicide and crisis prevention hotline.

This week, Council is set to formally endorse calls to designate 9-8-8 as a hotline for individuals in crisis after giving the thumbs-up to a motion from the Town of Caledon.

Council unanimously voted in favour of endorsing Caledon's motion, which says the three-digit line would ensure critical barriers are removed to those in crisis and seeking help.

The motion was forwarded to Aurora by Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson.

Caledon's resolution notes the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for suicide prevention services by 200 per cent and that suicide prevention lines require the user to remember a 10-digit number and go through directions or be placed on hold.

In 2022, the United States will have in place a national 9-8-8 crisis hotline, said Mayor Thompson. The Town of Caledon recognized that it is a significant and important initiative to ensure critical barriers are removed to those in crisis and seeking help. Caledon endorses this 9-8-8 crisis line initiative. Adopting 9-8-8 for this purpose is an initiative that has already seen traction in Ottawa, backed by a number of MPs including Dufferin-Caledon's Kyle Seebach who helped bring the matter forward earlier this year with British Columbia MP Todd Doherty.

Now, more than ever, the mental health of Canadians is being tested, said Doherty at the time. Increased isolation and heightened anxiety have led to higher rates of alcohol and substance abuse. Reports of domestic violence have gone up and we are seeing elevated levels of suicidal ideation and crises. First Nations communities across Canada continue to battle a growing suicide crisis.

Added Seebach: I myself have had serious bouts with depression over the years. I thought this was something to definitely try to get behind. I have been very fortunate in my life. I've had good friends, family, and the ability to speak to people when I needed to.

Some people, however, have not been as fortunate.

Until a three-digit hotline is in place, resources are still available if you are in crisis.

Crisis Services Canada can be contacted at 1-833-456-4566.

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With files from Alyssa Parkhill