

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

A new telephone help line for Fransaskois residents

SASKATOON, December 1, 2020 – The Saskatchewan Health Authority is announcing the confirmation of a \$95,000 partnership over three years with TAO Tel-Aide to make its telephone help line available to the Fransaskois community. The project's realization was made possible by a financial contribution from Health Canada under the *Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018-2023: Investing in Our Future*, and by the unwavering support of the Réseau santé en français de la Saskatchewan and the Ministry of Health, which spearheaded the initiative from the start. As of today, Saskatchewan's French-speaking residents experiencing situations of psychological distress or simply needing an empathetic ear will have access to this free service in French at any time of the day or night. The introduction of the TAO Tel-Aide help line in Saskatchewan is intended to provide improved access to French-language health services upstream of the mental health services continuum for all of Saskatchewan's Francophone minority communities.

"This partnership with TAO Tel-Aide is excellent news for Saskatchewan and timely in the context of COVID-19. This new service for Fransaskois residents will definitely allow for an improved active offer of services in French, increase access to information and local services, ease psychological distress and reduce isolation in our French-speaking communities while improving their well-being," says Jenna Webb, executive director of Online Strategy and Creative Services at the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

TAO Tel-Aide's 55 volunteers are trained and supervised to offer a caring and empathetic ear and to provide guidance and support within a solution-focused approach. Besides making an important contribution to preventive mental health, the TAO Tel-Aide help line provides other benefits, including:

- Reducing the demand for crisis services;
- Referring callers to local mental health services;
- Referring callers to French-language community support services;
- Reducing the language barrier at the level of access to community services;
- Reducing the stigmatization of persons living with a mental health dynamic.

"We welcome this new partnership very enthusiastically. This is an excellent opportunity for TAO Tel-Aide to share its expertise and make its help line available to a greater number of Francophones. Being able to express yourself in your own language when going through a challenging situation is essential to a person's well-being. TAO Tel-Aide is happy to meet this very real need within the Fransaskois community," says Monique Chartrand, TAO Tel-Aide executive director.

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“We’re particularly proud to participate in the launch of the TAO Tel-Aide help line. Starting today, Fransaskois residents have access to a new service accessible anytime and anywhere in the province. This is the culmination of a collaboration between several healthcare partners committed to serving our community better,” says Frédérique Baudemont, executive director of the Réseau santé en français de la Saskatchewan.

“We are pleased that the Ministry of Health was able to support this worthwhile project,” Health Minister Paul Merriman added. “It is so important for Saskatchewan people to have easy access to the mental health assistance they need, and it can be even more effective if available in their own language.”

TAO Tel-Aide

TAO Tel-Aide is a not-for-profit organization that has been active in the Ottawa-Gatineau region now for 46 years. TAO Tel-Aide offers a confidential telephone help line in French to assist people of all ages who are experiencing psychological distress. TAO Tel-Aide’s listening, support and referral line is a basic service provided by a dynamic team that supports over 55 dedicated and engaged volunteers. The organization, strongly rooted in Francophone communities, responded to 11,192 calls in 2019-2020 in its three call centres.

A reminder that TAO Tel-Aide’s help line is now available to Saskatchewan Francophones, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The service is free, confidential and answered only in French. There’s just one number to remember: 1-800-567-9699.

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Source:

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