



The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Community and Health Services

March 7, 2024

FOR DECISION

Report of the Commissioner of Community and Health Services

2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors: Navigating Forward Together

1. Recommendations

1. Council approve the 2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors: Navigating Forward Together (Attachment 1)
2. Regional Chair write to York Region Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament requesting they advocate to Federal and Provincial governments to seek collaboration, support and further investments to advance five priorities identified in the advocacy agenda of the 2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors: Navigating Forward Together including:
 - a. Mandating prevention-focused annual in-home or supported virtual visits with a health professional to proactively connect seniors 75 and older to needed information, health services and community supports
 - b. Policy planning and funding across seniors continuum of health and social care that leverages innovative evidence-based approaches to enable seniors to age in the right place for their own needs, circumstances and preferences, including promising practices like Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities and other age friendly supports
 - c. Sustainable funding for preventative and responsive Community Paramedicine programs that have proven to assist vulnerable seniors in their homes, and reduce avoidable 911 calls
 - d. Investments to sustain, scale and spread programs and supports that enhance seniors access to technology and reduce the digital divide
 - e. Establishment of a provincial service system manager or other form of coordinating body to coordinate and align improvements across multiple ministries, sectors and stakeholders supporting seniors

3. Regional Clerk circulate this report for information to York Region Members of Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament, local municipalities, York Region Human Services Planning Board, Home and Community Care Support Services Central, Ontario Health Teams in York Region, Ontario Health Central Region, AdvantAge Ontario, Ontario Long-Term Care Association, Ontario Community Support Association, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

2. Purpose

This report seeks Council approval of Attachment 1, the 2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors: Navigating Forward Together (the Plan). There are direct actions for areas the Region is responsible for, such as programs for seniors, and there are advocacy actions related to areas the Federal and Provincial governments are responsible for. This report also recommends advancing advocacy to the Federal and Provincial governments in five key areas of need.

Key Points:

- The 2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors: Navigating Forward Together (Attachment 1) updates the 2016 [York Region Seniors Strategy](#) to address current and future needs of seniors
- A research and engagement process informed the Plan. York Region staff, community partners, local municipal staff, seniors (aged 65+), pre-seniors (aged 55 to 64) and caregivers from across the Region were consulted in Fall 2021 and Fall 2022 to identify what has changed, and where new actions are needed to support seniors to age in the right place
- A Special Council Meeting on [October 5, 2023](#) discussed the Plan's proposed priority areas, actions and advocacy agenda
- The Plan's priority areas, actions and advocacy agenda aim to support seniors by enhancing their health and program knowledge, integrating services, streamlining navigation of services, and improving coordination across health and social care systems
- In October 2023, the province announced an initiative to establish a single organization, Ontario Health atHome, to seamlessly connect people to home care services. This initiative closely aligns with the Plan's recommended priority areas
- Bi-annual progress reports are planned for Q2 2026 and Q2 2028. An updated Plan will be presented to Council for consideration in 2028

3. Background

Collaborative planning and innovation are needed as the seniors population continues to grow and age over the next 30 years

By 2051, York Region's seniors population is expected to more than double, and close to one in four (23%) York Region residents will be over age 65. The most significant growth is expected among older seniors, those aged 75 and older, which is expected to triple over the next 30 years. Many older seniors require higher levels of care and assistance, putting pressure and demand on Regional programs and services like community housing, paramedic services, long-term care and transportation. As there are many different groups involved in planning and services for seniors, innovation and collaborative planning continue to be important.

This update to the 2016 Strategy will ensure programs and services delivered by the Region continue to evolve as the needs of current and future seniors change

In [November 2016](#), Regional Council approved the [York Region Seniors Strategy](#) (the 2016 Strategy) to guide collaborative planning activities and better integrate programs and services under the direct control of the Region.

The Plan identifies actions the Region can take to support the needs of the Region's growing seniors' population. It is a corporate Plan directed at areas within the Region's control. In response to consultation feedback on needs beyond the Region's jurisdiction, the Plan includes advocacy to other levels of government with the ability to address those needs.

Building on the [2016 Strategy accomplishments](#), the updated Plan aims to enhance the health and well-being of our aging population and their ability to age in the right place for their personal preferences, circumstances, and care needs.

Community engagement and research on seniors' needs informed the Plan

Engagement and research activities included:

- **Fall 2021 Online Survey:** received responses from over 1,300 seniors, pre-seniors and caregivers.
- **Fall 2021 Virtual Engagements:** engaged over 150 individuals, including York Region staff, members of previous Regional Council (2018 to 2022 term), community stakeholders including community partners, local municipal staff, seniors and caregivers.
- **Fall 2022 Validation Sessions:** conducted in-person, phone and online sessions with equity deserving groups who may not have been reached in Fall 2021 engagements (i.e., newcomer seniors, seniors and caregivers with limited access to technology, seniors and pre-seniors who are precariously housed/homeless, seniors

living in community housing/housing with supports, and those identifying as having a disability). Engaged new members of Regional Council (2022 to 2026 term).

- **Research:** reviewed literature to understand emerging issues affecting seniors to identify gaps, assess system strengths and limitations in supporting seniors and explore factors impacting an aging population.
- **October 2023 Special Council Meeting:** Provided Council with information and data on the growing and diverse needs of York Region seniors and how the Plan’s proposed priority areas and actions could address them. Council also heard from experts in fields of geriatrics, health policy and health and social care sectors to share alignments with other jurisdictions and initiatives supporting seniors and caregivers.

Community engagement findings are detailed in [What You Said](#), and [What You Said Summary](#) documents. See Attachment 1 for more information on the Plan’s development process.

4. Analysis

The Plan is guided by four priority areas

Four priority areas are recommended to address opportunities and system challenges for seniors living in York Region. For each priority area an objective is identified to guide efforts over the next three years.

Table 1 summarizes the direction for the Plan.

Table 1
Direction for 2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors

Priority Area	Objective
1. Keeping Seniors Healthier, Longer	Provide seniors, caregivers and staff supporting seniors information to help them improve physical activity and social connectedness, and slow decline of, or prevent chronic disease
2. Supporting Seniors to Live in Age-Friendly Complete Communities	Better integrate services for seniors
3. Connecting Seniors and Caregivers to Right Programs and Services at Right Times	Improve system navigation for seniors

Priority Area	Objective
4. Improving Coordination, Organization and Planning of Services for Seniors	Collaborate on and support strategic improvements for the overall system supporting seniors

Bi-annual progress reports will be provided to Council in Q2 2026 and Q2 2028. An updated Plan will be presented to Council for consideration in 2028.

The Plan includes actions where the Region has responsibility, and an advocacy agenda where others have responsibility to act

The Plan aims to support seniors across the broader continuum of health and social care through improved access to health and program information, service integration, enhanced system navigation, and collaborative system planning and shared service innovation.

Examples of actions from the Plan include:

- Communicating information on Public Health and Public Works services to raise awareness with seniors, caregivers and staff supporting seniors to help them stay healthy and connected. Proactively connecting seniors with important information early can help reduce social isolation and potential crisis
- Completing design, construction and operationalizing the seniors hub and community centre in Unionville Commons HYI building. The hub will be a place for residents of Unionville Commons and surrounding communities to access senior-focused services, programs and amenities encouraging social participation, wellness and enabling seniors to age in the right place
- Helping connect subsidized housing wait list applicants, including seniors, to available programs and resources while they wait for housing. Applicants are supported with financial needs assessment, literacy and empowerment tools to support income stabilization while they wait
- Implementing York Region Integrated Response for Vulnerable Seniors Network. The Vulnerable Seniors Network aims to stabilize vulnerable seniors in immediate crisis, including those experiencing homelessness, with needs-based solutions, wrap-around care and harm-reduction approaches to minimize potential for future crises

There are gaps and silos in the current system affecting seniors health and well-being

The Plan’s advocacy agenda identifies promising practices and areas of need requiring urgent attention and investment from provincial and federal governments to advance seniors health and well-being, including:

- Mandating prevention-focused annual in-home or supported virtual visits with a health professional to proactively connect seniors 75 and older to needed information, health services and community supports
- Policy planning and funding across a seniors continuum of health and social care that leverages innovative evidence-based approaches to enable seniors to age in the right place for their own preferences, circumstances and care needs, including promising practices like Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities and other age friendly supports
- Sustainable funding for preventative and responsive Community Paramedicine programs that have proven to assist vulnerable seniors in their homes, and reduce avoidable 911 calls
- Investments to sustain, scale and spread programs and supports that enhance seniors access to technology and reduce digital divides
- Establishment of a provincial service system manager or coordinating body to align improvements across multiple ministries, sectors and stakeholders supporting seniors

See Attachment 1 for the complete set of actions and advocacy agenda.

Staff will implement the Plan’s actions and monitor impacts

Pending Council approval, implementation of the actions and advocacy identified in the Plan will begin starting with the Chair’s letter seeking Federal and Provincial governments’ collaboration, support, and further investments to advance five priorities identified in the advocacy agenda. The Plan will be shared broadly with those who helped to inform it, including local municipalities, community partners, seniors, caregivers, sector associations and other interested stakeholders through a range of outreach methods and posted on york.ca.

In Q2 2026 and Q2 2028, deliverables, performance measures and targets set out in the Plan will be used to monitor and report bi-annually to Council on implementation of actions. Some targets remain under development as new baselines are established and actions evolve and will be included in bi-annual reports as appropriate.

Ontario Health Teams to receive consistent provincial funding for next three years to improve home care

There are 58 Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) in the Province tasked with improving how care is organized and delivered, so patients are better connected to coordinated care in their local communities. Under OHTs, health care providers and partners are to work as one coordinated team – no matter where they provide care. To support this work, starting in April 2024, the Province is investing over \$128.2 million to provide every Ontario Health Team, including all three York Region OHTs, with up to \$2.2 million over three years.

Three OHTs operate in York Region ([Eastern York Region North Durham](#), [Northern York South Simcoe](#) and [Western York Region](#)). York Region is a member of Eastern York Region North Durham and Northern York South Simcoe OHTs and works in close partnership with Western York Region OHT. As a member and close partner of the OHTs, the Region collaborates with hospital and community partners on innovative approaches that support the health and well-being of York Region residents of all ages and stages, including seniors and caregivers.

Province announced changes to establish a single organization, Ontario Health atHome, to seamlessly connect people to home care services

On October 4, 2023 the Ontario government tabled Bill 135, Convenient Care at Home Act, 2023 to consolidate the 14 Home and Community Care Support Services organizations into a single organization – Ontario Health atHome – and will make OHTs responsible for connecting people to home care services starting in 2025. Ontario Health atHome will provide home care plans through OHTs so individuals know the care they will receive and when before being discharged from hospital. Ontario Health atHome will also provide placement services for long-term care. Bill 135 received Royal Assent on December 2023.

An initial group of [12 OHTs](#), none from York Region, were chosen to accelerate work to deliver home care in their local communities starting in 2025. The Ministry of Health will support them with an additional \$6.2 million in 2023 to 2024.

Province’s plan to deliver connected and convenient care aligns with priority areas of the Plan to Support Seniors

The Province’s plan to deliver connected and convenient care aims to connect people in Ontario to health care they need, when they need it, and keep people at home for as long as possible. The plan to modernize home care aligns with priority areas of the Plan by improving access to services, supporting seniors to age in the right place, improving system navigation and breaking down silos across health and social care sectors. York Region, the three York Region OHTs and the Province are each striving to ensure our residents are healthy and supported across the health and social care sectors. Given this alignment and with strong partnerships and innovative solutions underway, the Region is advocating to include all three York Region OHTs in the accelerated group tasked to advance the delivery of connected and convenient care.

As the Province moves the *Convenient Care at Home Act* forward, the Region is well positioned to continue to seek support and leverage synergies for actions and advocacy agenda of the Plan as a partner on all three York Region OHTs.

The Plan supports the Healthy Communities Area of Focus

The Plan aligns with the 2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan – Healthy Communities Area of Focus. It aims to provide seniors with health and program information, integrate services, improve

system navigation and enhance overall coordination to help them age in the right place with appropriate support for their needs, promoting better health and preventing crisis.

5. Financial Considerations

Total gross expenditures in the 2024 approved operating budget for implementing the coordination and oversight of the Plan is \$601,500. This is 100% funded through tax levy.

Any cost impacts beyond 2024 will be addressed through the budget process as required. Implementation plans currently under development will include additional evidence-based funding requests backed by business cases.

Staff will continue to pursue opportunities to access senior government funding to support the Plan. Grant applications will also be considered to offset costs.

6. Local Impact

Growth in the seniors population is anticipated to occur across all nine local municipalities over the next 30 years. Seniors across York Region will benefit from the implementation of the actions and advocacy efforts identified in the Plan.

Since implementing the 2016 Strategy, the Region has been working collaboratively with local municipalities and community organizations serving seniors to leverage opportunities for new partnerships and innovative solutions to support seniors to age in the right place. The Region is well positioned to continue this collaborative work with local and community partners to ensure their expertise is reflected in the actions identified and implemented in the Plan.

7. Conclusion

The Region is well positioned to continue working collaboratively with other levels of government, local municipalities, and community organizations to provide better care and support to ensure seniors are healthier, connected to their communities and able to age in the right place.

The 2024 to 2027 York Region Plan to Support Seniors provides direction over four years to ensure seniors in York Region continue to receive the best possible supports and services. It does this by outlining actions to enhance Regional programs and services and through a strong advocacy agenda to improve the broader system supporting seniors.

For more information on this report, please contact Lisa Gonsalves, General Manager, Paramedic and Seniors Services at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72090. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Approved for Submission:

Erin Mahoney
Chief Administrative Officer

February 13, 2024
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Attachment 1 – York Region Plan to Support Seniors (#15130483)