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## Report of the Acting Commissioner of Community and Health Services **Provincial Homelessness and Addiction Recovery and Treatment (HART) Hubs**

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### **1. Recommendation**

1. The Regional Clerk circulate a letter of support, signed by the Regional Chair, York Regional Police Chief and Mayors, for Addiction Services Central Ontario's proposal to establish and operate a Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub in York Region to the Minister of Health, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, Associate Minister of Housing, and York Region Members of Parliament and York Region Members of Provincial Parliament.

### **2. Purpose**

This report provides information to Council about the new provincial Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs and seeks Council's support of [Addiction Services Central Ontario](#) (ASCO)'s proposal, in response to the Province's Call For Proposals (CFP) to establish and operate a HART Hub in York Region. ASCO is a community-based organization that provides services and supports for mental health, addiction and homelessness across York Region and is one of the largest Health Service Providers of community addiction services in Ontario.

The Province will create 19 HART Hubs, of which 10 are being implemented through a CFP process. This process will determine funding allocation over four years for a "Demonstration Project" for 10 HART Hubs operated across Ontario.

Council support of ASCO's HART Hub proposal aligns with York Region's [2023 to 2027 Strategic Plan](#), [10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan](#), [Homelessness Service System Plan](#), and the [Opioid Action Plan](#).

York Region is the designated Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. As part of the CFP process, the Province requires Service Managers to endorse proposals that align with municipal service planning and supportive housing needs.

## Key Points:

- Province first announced HART Hubs on [August 20, 2024](#). On [August 29, 2024](#), the Ministry of Health announced a CFP to establish HART Hubs across the province. HART Hubs are intended to be comprehensive, locally-based approaches to providing people with complex needs a range of low-barrier critical services such as mental health services, addiction treatment, primary care, social services and employment support
- Province has stated that HART Hubs are a critical step in filling gaps in mental health and addictions care, addressing the increase in demand for substance use services and helping ensure vulnerable people connect to high quality care where and when they need it, including to supportive housing
- Province is providing up to \$6.3 million per year per HART Hub, including \$1.3 million per year for supportive housing. Staff do not anticipate any tax levy impact
- HART Hubs will be demonstration projects so the Province can test co-located and/or coordinated local services for individuals with complex service needs. Efficacy, outcomes, and value for money will be determined through the mandatory evaluation by the Province. This evaluation will inform future funding and program decisions
- Province requested Municipal Service Managers for Housing and Homelessness distribute information regarding the provincial CFP. ASCO notified the Region of their intent to participate in the process and submitted their Intent to Apply on September 20, 2024. No other community agency has expressed interest to the Region that they intend to apply for the provincial CFP. The Province has requested Service Managers endorse proposals that align with municipal service planning and supportive housing needs
- Agencies leading proposals must be non-profit Health Service Providers, as defined under the [Connecting Care Act, 2019](#). ASCO is a non-profit Health Service Provider
- 64% of people who completed York Region's 2021 Point-in-Time Count survey reported a mental health condition, while 48% reported a substance use issue. The Point-in-Time Count takes place over a 24-hour period and is an enumeration of people who may be experiencing homelessness
- Over 5,700 calls to York Regional Police in 2023 were related to mental health occurrences, an increase of 27% from 2020

### 3. Background

#### **HART Hubs will incorporate a range of services including mental health and addictions services, primary care, and supportive housing**

The Province's HART Hubs are intended to be locally-based programs that provide people with complex needs with a range of services, including mental health, addiction treatment, primary care, social services, and employment. HART Hubs are intended to increase availability and access to supportive housing, adding up to 375 supportive housing units across Ontario, ensuring people have stable housing as they receive services. Major capital expenditures, supervised drug consumption sites, safe supply and needle exchange services are not in scope for this initiative.

HART Hubs are required to either be co-located in the same physical space with other community services or integrated through preexisting referral pathways. The Province is providing flexibility to communities to determine how services are provided at each HART Hub and how best to respond to their local needs.

#### **ASCO is submitting a proposal to establish a HART Hub in York Region**

HART Hubs are required to be led by non-profit Health Service Providers, as defined under the [Connecting Care Act, 2019](#). HART Hub applicants should demonstrate community-level collaboration with key regional partners, including Ontario Health Teams, Service Managers, police, etc. The Province has provided a detailed timeline for selecting HART Hub locations as shown in Appendix A.

As required by the Province, staff notified community service providers about the provincial CFP process and asked those interested in submitting a proposal to connect with the Region. ASCO is the only community agency that has expressed interest to the Region that they intend to apply for the provincial CFP. ASCO is working with Ontario Health Central Region and over 19 community service providers (Appendix B) in York Region to develop the proposal and will submit it on October 18, 2024. Canadian Mental Health Association, Your Support Services, Krasman Center, Northern York South Simcoe Ontario Health Team, and Eastern York Region North Durham Ontario Health Team are among the many community service providers who have expressed their interest in supporting ASCO's proposal.

ASCO has extensive experience working with partners, including many community service providers supporting its proposal for a HART Hub. For example, ASCO, Caritas School of Life and Krasman Centre are piloting a withdrawal management centre in York Region which started in 2023, providing six beds, drop-in supports, peer support, counselling, case management and harm reduction. Community service providers that are supporting the proposal provide a range of services that include mental health, addictions, homelessness, housing, employment and skills development.

Recognizing that York Region covers a large geographic area with nine local municipalities, ASCO's proposal will ensure programs and services are available in different locations within the Region and intends to provide services to youth, adults, and families. Programs and services that will be offered

include: service navigation, access to housing and housing supports, substance use services, social services and employment supports, primary care, and mental health crisis care and referral to service. Based on this approach and with the collaboration of other community service providers, ASCO will have a strong proposal for the Province to consider.

## **Mental health and substances use are predominant in homelessness**

In 2023, the number of people experiencing homelessness and accessing homelessness services in York Region reached 1,784, up from 1,395 in 2019. The average length of stay in emergency housing has almost doubled from 2019 to 2023, from 26.5 to 49.3 days. The number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in York Region reached 473 in 2023, up from 124 in 2019. Chronic homelessness is experiencing homelessness for longer than six months in the past year.

The Federal Government [Report on Addiction, Substance Use and Homelessness](#) found that people experiencing homelessness are at greater risk of physical and mental health issues, and the proportion of people who report addictions or substance use increases as they experience homelessness for longer periods. People experiencing chronic homelessness may have more complex needs and require greater resources to stabilize life and find and keep housing. 64% of people who completed York Region's [2021 Point-in-Time Count](#) survey reported a mental health condition, while 48% reported a substance use issue.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [reports](#) that various Canadian cities have indicated between 23% and 67% of people experiencing homelessness may have mental illness. Additionally, the Centre reports that people with a mental illness are twice as likely to have a substance use disorder compared to the general population. At least 20% of people with a mental illness have a co-occurring substance use disorder.

## **4. Analysis**

### **York Region staff and York Regional Police support ASCO's proposal in principle**

HART Hub proposals are required by the Province to be endorsed by the local Service Manager. While Service Managers are not being asked to make recommendations on proposals, the Province has requested Service Managers endorse proposals that align with municipal service planning and supportive housing needs. Priority consideration by the Province is given to proposals that demonstrate well established partnerships and pathways and existing infrastructure/capacity.

As required by the provincial CFP process, ASCO submitted their Intent to Apply to the Province on September 20, 2024. Final Applications with Service Manager endorsement are due to the Province on October 18, 2024. Successful proponents will be notified by the Province in November/December 2024. Start-up funding will be released in mid-December 2024. Hubs are expected to be operational by Winter 2025 (see Appendix A for provincial timeline graphic).

York Region staff have supported development of ASCO's proposal by providing information and data, and encouraging collaboration and engagement with other service providers. York Regional

Police is also supportive of ASCO's proposal and has shared data, operational experience and information on community needs, and will support implementation of a HART Hub in York Region if successful. York Region staff will review ASCO's proposal prior to submission to the Province on October 18, 2024 to ensure alignment with regional priorities.

## **A HART Hub in York Region would support York Region's Homelessness Service System and Emergency Services**

York Region identified in Priority Areas Three and Four of the [Homelessness Service System Plan](#) the need to strengthen and build partnerships to respond to homelessness and to advocate for improved access to mental health, substance use and culturally appropriate wellness supports. The HART Hub project is an opportunity for community service providers in York Region to collaborate on innovative approaches to address gaps in vital mental health, substance use and wellness services and supports in the homelessness service system.

If York Region were awarded a HART Hub by the Province this would mean additional provincial funding into mental health, substance use and wellness supports for residents in the Region, and provide a solution to address key complex barriers for people experiencing homelessness to find and keep housing.

A HART Hub in York Region aligns with initiatives underway to address service gaps identified by York Regional Police and York Region Paramedic Services, and diverts people from more costly emergency interventions and responds to resident needs more effectively. For example, York Regional Police's Mental Health Engagement and Outreach Team was created to provide more upstream interventions, ensuring that people who need support are engaged before they need emergency services. Since inception in March 2024, York Regional Police has seen a decrease of 5% in "chronic" mental health calls (two or more calls in 4 days) and about a 10% decrease in "repeat" mental health calls (two calls in 12 months).

York Region has also implemented the Community Paramedicine and Outreach Response Team (CPORT), which is a partnership between the Region's Outreach Program, Community Paramedicine, and community doctors to provide access to primary care, mental health and substance use support, and social services to people experiencing homelessness.

A HART Hub in York Region would provide an alternative access point for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, which could result in decreased calls to 911 or more costly interventions and ensure that people at risk of or experiencing homelessness can more easily access tailored mental health, substance use and wellness supports when they need them. (See Table 1 for Emergency Services and Mental Health and Addictions Data).

**Table 1**  
**Emergency Services Mental Health and Addictions Data**

Report Type	Data Reported
Paramedic Services Service Calls – Suspected Opioid Overdose	Increased from 41 to 152, or 271% from 2018 to 2023
Opioid-Related Deaths	Increased from 59 to 79, from 2022 to 2023, an increase of 34%
York Regional Police Calls	Over 5,700 calls in 2023 were related to mental health occurrences, an increase of 27% from 2020 to 2023
Paramedic Services Calls	Suspected mental health occurrences increased from 662 to 1,666, from 2019 to 2023 or 152%
CPORT Team Response	In 2023, 103 client referrals were related to mental health and addictions

## 5. Financial Considerations

This report does not present current or anticipated financial changes to the Region’s budget or fiscal position. Provincial funding is expected to flow directly to the HART Hub operator and not through the Region. Staff do not anticipate any tax levy impact.

### **The Province is providing up to \$6.3 million per year per Hub**

Ontario will invest up to \$378 million for “Demonstration Projects” that would support creation of 19 HART Hubs, of which ten are being implemented through a CFP process, two will be Indigenous-focused, and a separate process will determine implementation of the remaining nine. The Province will fund each of the 10 HART Hubs with a budget of \$6.3 million per year per hub, including \$1.3 million per year to be used specifically for supportive housing, from 2025 to 2028. \$1.8 million will be provided per hub in 2024 to 2025 to support one-time startup and implementation costs.

## 6. Local Impact

A HART Hub in York Region will support the response to needs of residents across all nine local municipalities. York Region, York Regional Police, and various community service providers are developing strategies and actions that can support people experiencing homelessness and challenges with mental health and addiction.

## 7. Conclusion

As identified in York Region's Homelessness Service System Plan, homelessness requires a whole community approach, including partnerships with other systems, community partners, and service providers. ASCO's HART Hub proposal is critical to supporting the ongoing response to helping people who may be at risk of or experiencing homelessness in York Region. A successful proposal can mean additional provincial investment in communities in mental health and addiction supports which will help divert more people from costly emergency interventions.

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For more information on this memo, please contact Kevin Pal, General Manager at 1-877-464-9675 ext.72150. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.



Recommended by:

**Lisa Gonsalves**

Acting Commissioner of Community and Health Services



Approved for Submission:

**Erin Mahoney**

Chief Administrative Officer

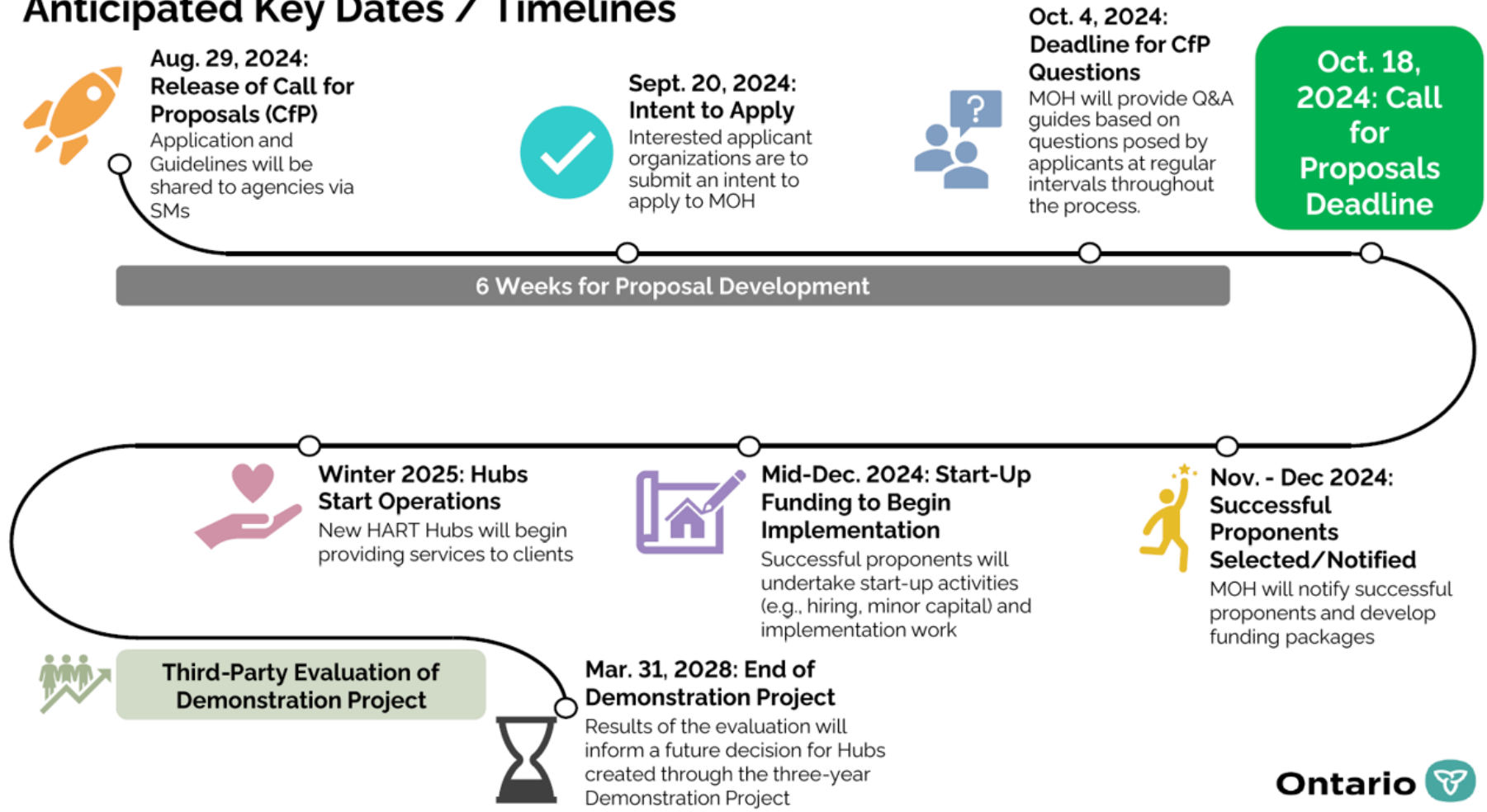
October 2, 2024

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Appendix A – Provincial Timelines for HART Hub Proposals

Appendix B – York Region HART Hub Partners

## Anticipated Key Dates / Timelines





## ADDICTION SERVICES OF CENTRAL ONTARIO (ASCO) HART HUB PARTNERS

The Regional Municipality of York (Service Manager)	Inn From the Cold (Emergency and Transitional Housing provider for men, women and couples)
York Regional Police (Police Services)	CAYR Community Connections (Addictions Services, Services for 2SLGBTQ+)
Canadian Mental Health Association York Region South Simcoe (Mental Health Services)	York Hills Children, Youth and Family Mental Health Centre (Children and Family Services, and Mental Health Services)
Krasman Centre (Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions Services)	360Kids (Emergency and Transitional Housing provider for youth)
Northern York South Simcoe Ontario Health Team (Broad Health Services including Primary and Acute Care, Mental Health, and Addictions)	WCG (Employment Service System Manager for York Region)
Eastern York Region North Durham Ontario Health Team (Broad Health Services including Primary and Acute Care, Mental Health, and Addictions)	Your Support Services Network (Developmental, Mental Health and Children's Services)
Blue Door Community Services (Emergency and Transitional Housing provider for men and families)	LOFT Community Services (Mental Health, Addictions, and Supportive Housing Services)
Vitanova Foundation (Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions Services)	Yellow Brick House (Violence Against Women Services)
Caritas School of Life (Mental Health and Addictions Services)	Canadian Centre for Men and Families (Mental Health and Social Services)
Elizabeth Fry Help and Hope for Women (Women's Social Services)	