



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Samantha Howard, Director of Recreation Services

DATE: June 20, 2023

REPORT NO.: RP-2023-009

SUBJECT: Youth Services Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. RP-2023-009 dated June 14, 2023 regarding Youth Services Update be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse staff to pursue Youth Wellness Hub Ontario funding through the Ministry of Health;

AND FURTHER THAT the Director of Recreation Services draft a letter for Mayor and Council to advocate to the Member of Parliament support for the Town's funding application;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council with an update on the outcome of the business case and funding decision.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Halton Hills Youth Network has been providing integrated youth service delivery since 2016;
- The town operates two recreational youth centres which act as a conduit for single-point access to a variety of health and social services for young people ages 12 – 24 years;
- In January 2023, the province of Ontario announced additional funding for Youth Wellness Hubs under the Ministry of Health;

- Staff recommend that Council support the Town's business case proposal for Youth Wellness Hub funding.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on the following Youth Service initiatives:

- Update on the status of the **Halton Hills Youth Network**
- Summary of continued and expanded youth service delivery at the **Halton Hills Youth Centres**
- Overview and request to pursue **Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario** status and application for funding.

Halton Hills Youth Network

The Halton Hills Youth Network is a collection of youth-serving agencies developed and led by the Recreation and Parks department since 2016. The purpose of the Network is to ensure youth service delivery is aligned and most effective in addressing youth needs through coordination, collaboration, and partnership. Early on, the network recognized that the complicated interdisciplinary needs of youth would benefit from a diverse partnership of service providers. Today, there are over 16 organizations represented on the network plus interested businesses, faith-based organizations, and service clubs. The range of services covers Recreation and Socialization, Mental Health and Substance Use, Housing, Life Skills, Employment, Food Security, Service Navigation, Social Work and Halton Region. The Youth Network continues to meet as a large group four times per year and smaller working group meetings occur monthly. Members of this network act as a governance structure for the types of programs, services and activities offered at the Youth Centres.

Since 2016, the Network has been successful with various funding opportunities that has brought service navigation and mental health clinical and crisis supports to our community. In 2023, one of our key network partners, ADAPT (The Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Assessment, Prevention & Treatment services), was successful with a grant proposal through the Halton Region Community Investment Fund and received one year funding in the amount of \$62,251 to provide on-site substance use supports for youth in the Centres by way of a Youth Concurrent Worker. This position will work part time across both locations from September 2023 – August 2024. It gives us the capacity to provide immediate response and support for those in need of substance use counselling as well as prevention strategies and group programming.

Halton Hills Youth Centre Programs and Services

The Town of Halton Hills Youth Centres is committed to the development of recreation programming that promotes an active, social, and educational environment for youth.

Recreation continues to play an important role on the health care continuum and the Youth Centres act as a conduit for single-point access to a variety of health and social services. Participants range from ages 12 – 24 years for daily recreation programming and ‘wrap-around services’ by various partner agencies. It is a drop-in model where youth can come and go to each location freely. There are no barriers to entry and there is no cost to participate.

Aligning with the priorities of the Youth Service Delivery Model, youth can participate and engage in the following at the Centres:

- Recreation and socialization opportunities including physical fitness and active living.
- Food security with daily snacks, prepared meals, and an open access food pantry.
- On site mental health and addictions supports and obtain referral to other programs and services.
- Increased life skills through partnership programs with the Halton Hills Public Library, Employment agencies and Halton Police Services.
- Service Navigation and Housing supports through Bridging the Gap and Halton Region
- Youth leadership and community involvement.

The Youth Centres are open Monday – Friday from 3:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. between September and June and 1:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. in July and August.

The needs of youth are dynamic and ever evolving. To effectively address these changing needs, it is crucial for programs and the service delivery model to be adaptable and responsive. By having a model that allows staff to pivot and access necessary resources quickly, organizations can better meet the current trends and challenges faced by youth. By working together, we have been able to address youth needs with a flexible approach, have a timely response to emerging trends and challenges, remain up to date with research, best practices, and evidence-based interventions, and most importantly work closely with youth themselves, hear their voices, and let them ‘have a say’ in decision-making.

Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario

Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO) is an initiative that aims to bring the right services to youth (and their families) at the right time and in the right place. YWHO is a critical step toward improving Ontario’s mental health and addictions services for youth and young adults by:

- Providing rapid access to easily identifiable mental health and substance use services with walk-in, low-barrier services, and clear service pathways.
- Providing evidence-based interventions matched to individuals’ level of need, and supported transitions to specialized care services when the severity of need is evident.

- Integrating mental health, substance use, primary care, vocational, housing and other support services into a 'one-stop-shop' model of care offered in a youth-friendly space.
- Reducing transitions between services through co-location and shared services in a single place.
- Establishing common evaluation across sites.
- Co-creating services with youth and families.

The Province of Ontario launched funding for YWHO in 2017. Today, there are 16 funded YWHO's across Ontario and in January of 2023 additional funding was announced.

At the Provincial level, YWHO brings into action ***Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy: Open Minds, Healthy Minds***. It operationalizes system transformation through focusing on mental health and overall well-being of youth through an integrated approach to program and service delivery.

At the local level, YWHO supports communities to understand their assets, bring them together into a collaborative process to better understand the needs and strengths of their youth, and customize implementation of YWHO values, standards, and services to optimize youth outcomes.

Since 2016, the Town of Halton Hills has built this model through strategic partnerships with the Halton Hills Youth Network. We are recognized leaders in our industry and positioned to expand our level of service with this funding opportunity. In March 2023, staff reached out to representatives at YWHO and hosted a tour of our spaces and an information session about our model. In April 2023, we were assigned a YWHO Consultant to help us formulate a business case for funding. We are eligible to request \$50,000 - \$300,000 per year for up to three years to be used for implementation, growth, and ongoing operating costs, plus a one-time capital request up to \$100,000 for physical space renovations and/or capital investment.

Staff are requesting Council's approval to proceed with a business case and submission for Youth Wellness Hub Ontario funding. This funding will give us the opportunity to do the following:

- Expand hours of operation to support health and social services that complement the school day.
- Convert existing part time Recreation Youth Programmer(s) to full-time equivalent hours who will provide the on-site supervision and facility management.
- Expand staff hours for mental health crisis and clinical supports through ROCK (Reach Out Centre for Kids) and CMHA (Canadian Mental Health Association)
- Expand staff hours for addictions counsellors and a peer support team following the end of the one-year Community Investment Fund with ADAPT.
- Secure services of a dedicated Nurse Practitioner for primary care needs through a partner.

- Complete leasehold improvements to our Georgetown location in partnership with Halton District School Board.

The Town of Halton Hills has demonstrated commitment to service young people in this way for many years. Youth Wellness Hubs are designed to provide ready access to high quality, integrated services that focus on keeping youth and their families at the centre of care. Additional funding will give us the leverage needed to expand our level of service, target more youth, and close the funding gap for multiple service agencies. The Halton Hills Youth Centres meet the YWHO criteria and are known in our community as a safe and supportive environment where youth people can access the programs and services they need at each stage of youth development.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have an impact on the Town's Strategic Plan.

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to provide responsive, effective municipal government and strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services.

This report also identifies youth and senior initiatives as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement was not needed as this report is administrative in nature.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Members of the Halton Hills Youth Network and partners identified in this report are aware of this request and support us in pursuing this funding opportunity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications.

If the Town is successful with a funding application, there will be incremental funding to support youth services as well as enhanced requirements for financial reporting.

Reviewed and approved by,

Moya Jane Leighton, Director of Finance & Town Treasurer

Paul Damaso, Commissioner of Recreation & Parks

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer