

Downtown Homelessness Addiction Recovery and Treatment (HART) Hub

Date: May 16, 2025

To: Board of Health

From: Acting Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

In 2024, the City of Toronto, in collaboration with health care and community partners, applied to the Ministry of Health to establish the Downtown Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub. The Downtown HART Hub aims to improve the health of Toronto residents by facilitating access to health care services for people who use drugs, including improved access to treatment and recovery services, and integrated pathways to wraparound supports such as mental health care and housing.

On January 2, 2025, the Ministry of Health confirmed that the City of Toronto had been approved 'in principle' to implement a Downtown HART Hub. This report provides an overview of plans to establish the City of Toronto's Downtown HART Hub and seeks authority for the Medical Officer of Health to enter into agreements with external parties to implement the HART Hub.

This report also provides an overview of the client case management, aggregate reporting, and outreach coordination plan for the Downtown HART Hub as directed by the Board of Health on April 1, 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Acting Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. City Council approve the creation of the Downtown Homelessness Addiction Recovery and Treatment (HART) Hub.

2. City Council authorize the Medical Officer of Health to enter into agreements and other arrangements, on an ongoing basis, with other entities, including City divisions, hospitals, health care organizations, physicians and other health care providers, and community organizations for the purpose of delivering programs and services through the Downtown Homelessness Addiction Recovery and Treatment (HART) Hub in Toronto that are fully funded by the Government of Ontario and within the approved Toronto Public Health budget, in accordance with applicable program and funding guidelines, on such terms and conditions that are satisfactory to the Medical Officer of Health and in a form approved by the City Solicitor.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts associated with the adoption of the recommendations in this report. The Downtown HART Hub's operations will be fully funded by the Government of Ontario.

On January 2, 2025, the Ministry of Health confirmed that the City of Toronto had been approved 'in principle' to implement a Downtown HART Hub. As of May 16, 2025, the City has not received a funding allocation letter from the Government of Ontario. Once confirmation is received, Toronto Public Health will request the necessary budget adjustments for the 2025 Operating Budget for Toronto Public Health for both the interim and permanent Downtown HART Hub Programming through the next available Operating Variance Report.

Required operating funding to advance both the interim and permanent Downtown HART Hub will be included in 2026 and future budget processes. Funding for a permanent location of a Downtown HART Hub has been included in the 2025 Capital Budget and 2026-2034 Capital Plan for Toronto Public Health and Corporate Real Estate Management.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

On April 1, 2025, the Board of Health directed the Acting Medical Officer of Health to report back with an update on the interim and permanent HART Hub models; any agreements and authorities required to enable the Downtown HART Hub; and to develop a comprehensive client case management, aggregate reporting, and outreach coordination plan.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.HL23.8>

On January 20, 2025, the Board of Health urged the Government of Ontario to increase access to Supervised Consumption Services and Consumption and Treatment Service Sites consistent with the location requirements within the Community Care and

Recovery Act, 2024, permit needle exchange services within HART Hubs, and share provincial plans for mitigating healthcare system impacts.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.HL21.6>

On November 18, 2024, the Board of Health continued to recognize the drug toxicity epidemic as a public health crisis and continued to commit to actions that are evidence-based and urgently needed to promote wellbeing and community safety and aligned with the Our Health, Our City strategy. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.HL18.2>

On November 27, 2023, the Board of Health requested the Province of Ontario and Government of Canada to provide increased, ongoing and sustainable funding for shelter services, affordable housing and supportive housing, including supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness, complex mental health and/or substance use challenges. The Board of Health also requested the Province of Ontario to fund low-barrier crisis stabilization spaces for people with mental health and/or substance use related issues that operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week across the city as part of a full continuum of evidence-based services, treatment and wraparound supports. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.HL8.1>

COMMENTS

The Province has made a commitment to invest \$550 million to create a total of 28 HART Hubs across Ontario. These HART Hubs are being led by community health centres, hospitals, and other mental health and substance use providers.

Toronto Public Health and collaborators across City divisions, health care, and community service providers applied to the Ministry of Health to establish the Downtown HART Hub. This application was approved 'in principle' on January 2, 2025. HART Hubs aim to connect people who use drugs to treatment and recovery services, housing supports, social services, mental health and health care. As directed by the Province, the HART Hub model does not permit supervised consumption, safer supply, drug checking, or needle exchange services.

Toronto Public Health is currently working with Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM) to establish a location and finalize plans for a permanent HART Hub, including engagement with external parties to confirm the program model and design.

In the interim, the Downtown HART Hub is operating as a disaggregated model with services being offered across multiple collaborator locations and through outreach efforts. Some services became available starting April 1, 2025, with more coming throughout the year.

The City of Toronto's mental health and substance use strategy, Our Health, Our City (OHOC) was developed through extensive engagement that centred populations with lived and living experience of mental health and substance use challenges, and included experts, community leaders, mental health and harm reduction service

providers, and staff from several City divisions. As part of the OHOC goal to expand access to high-quality, evidence-based and client-centred services, Toronto Public Health contributes to the continuum of care, including prevention, harm reduction and treatment options. Many of the planned Downtown HART Hub programs and services are informed by the OHOC consultations, which highlighted several gaps in service, including limited detox beds, increased need for opioid agonist treatment, need for improved access to primary care and mental health care, and better linkages to social services and supportive housing.

Downtown HART Hub

The Downtown HART Hub will provide enhanced access to a suite of integrated health and social services, including primary care, substance use treatment, and mental health care, tailored to the needs of people who use drugs and people experiencing homelessness. It will also create referral pathways to supportive housing and other wraparound services. The Downtown HART Hub is a collaborative effort between several City of Toronto Divisions and external parties in the health care and community services sector to establish and deliver services through the Downtown HART Hub. These include:

City of Toronto Partners	External Parties
City Manager's Office	Unity Health Toronto (St. Michael's Hospital)
Deputy City Manager, Community and Emergency Services	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Toronto Public Health	Inner City Health Associates
Toronto Paramedic Services	Family Services Toronto
Toronto Shelter & Support Services	Good Shepherd Ministries
Housing Secretariat	Downtown East Toronto Ontario Health Team
Social Development	

Permanent HART Hub Model

Planned services

The City is working to establish a permanent site as the future location to house HART Hub services. The co-location of public health, health care, and community services within a single, accessible setting offers a streamlined and coordinated model of care that will be responsive to the needs of people who use drugs and those who are experiencing homelessness. This integrated approach will enhance collaboration across sectors and increase pathways to care and substance use treatment for people who use drugs. Through the development of new programming and referral pathways, the Downtown HART Hub is expected to provide the following services:

- ***Opioid Agonist Treatment Team***: This team provides substance use disorder treatment (i.e. Opioid Agonist Treatment) to those with substance use disorder. Case management and connections to other treatment services and health care referrals will also be facilitated.

- **Concurrent Disorders Assertive Community Treatment Team:** This is a multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, case managers and peer support workers, that provides comprehensive, community-based psychiatric treatment, rehabilitation and support services to individuals who use substances and experience mental health issues.
- **Supportive Housing:** The Downtown HART Hub will be connected to 25 provincially funded supportive housing units in the Downtown East, to provide clients of the Hub with access to permanent, supportive housing. Supportive housing provides individuals exiting homelessness, especially those with complex needs, with a rent-geared-to-income home and the necessary support services to help them maintain stable permanent housing and improve their health and wellbeing.
- **Primary Care:** Clients will have access to on-site primary care providers including, physicians or nurse practitioners who can provide services such as wound care, foot care and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- **Dental Referrals, STI Screening and Vaccination:** Clients will be referred to dental health clinic services, and onsite sexually transmitted and bloodborne infection screening and vaccinations.
- **Homelessness and Substance Use Response and Coordinated Access Team:** This team will provide intake, monitoring, and crisis stabilization services with connections to health services for people experiencing homelessness or a substance use disorder.
- **Referrals to Wraparound Services:** Clients will have access to a range of wraparound services, which may include referrals to employment opportunity services, mental health counselling, group therapy, evidence-based treatment programming, outreach services, workshops, and intimate partner violence support groups.
- **On-site Medical Withdrawal Management Beds:** Downtown HART Hub clients will have access to ten nurse practitioner-led detox and withdrawal management beds.
- **Withdrawal/Detox Management Bed Referrals:** Clients will be referred to available withdrawal management and treatment beds, services that monitor and support people who wish to stop using drugs safely (e.g. managing withdrawal symptoms), across the city.

Interim HART Hub Model

Since April 1, 2025, the City and its collaborators have been operationalizing the Downtown HART Hub in a disaggregated model. All programs and services planned for

the permanent HART Hub model, except for on-site withdrawal management beds, will be available through the interim model. Treatment services, including Opioid Agonist Treatment, are currently available for registered clients at an interim clinical services location at 117 The Esplanade. Remaining services will become available at other downtown access points throughout the first year of operation until the permanent site is ready. In June 2025, the City will convene a half-day operations exercise, which will contribute to finalizing the Year-1 model, including enhanced case management processes.

Outreach will play a critical role in engaging clients and facilitating access to interim HART Hub services while operating in this disaggregated model. Toronto Public Health will continue to align the interim Hub model with the permanent model to minimize disruption to both clients and staff.

Attachment 1 outlines Downtown HART Hub programs and their expected start dates at both the interim and future permanent locations, and details the sequence in which services will be launched.

Request for delegated authority

This report recommends that City Council grant the Medical Officer of Health the authority to enter into agreements and other arrangements with health care organizations and providers, community organizations, physicians and others for the purpose of delivering Downtown HART Hub programs and services that will be fully funded by the province.

If approved, this delegated authority will enable the City to efficiently establish the agreements necessary to provide these services and allocate provincial funding once a provincial funding letter is received. These agreements and funding allocations will be reported on through annual budget and TPH service agreement reporting processes.

City Council has previously approved delegated authority for City staff to enter into similar agreements. For example, in 2020, City Council approved delegated authority for the General Manager, Toronto Shelter and Support Services, to receive and allocate federal and provincial funding for the delivery of housing and homelessness services ([2020.EC12.2](#)). In 2023, City Council also authorized the Medical Officer of Health to enter into agreements with a range of entities and institutions for the purpose of delivering mandated dental and oral health services that are fully funded by the Province of Ontario ([2023.HL4.1](#))

Client Case Management

The City is taking a client-centered and comprehensive approach to assisting clients of the Downtown HART hub in navigating the interim disaggregated model and the transition to the permanent model.

In the disaggregated model, clients will be connected to the Downtown HART Hub through the Homelessness and Substance Use Response and Coordinated Access

Team, the Concurrent Disorders Assertive Community Treatment Team, and referrals from other Hub partners. Upon entry, clients will be directly linked with Case Managers. Case Managers will include social workers and counsellors responsible for triaging and tracking HART Hub clients accessing programs and services. Beginning in June 2025, the teams will meet biweekly to further strengthen outreach coordination and referrals. This will include operational leads across organizations working with the Downtown HART Hub.

Toronto Public Health will continue to work with HART Hub parties to develop a case management process for the permanent site, and identify opportunities to enhance wraparound case management services, including collaborating to provide referrals to employment opportunity services, mental health counselling, group therapy, evidence-based treatment programming, population targeted outreach and service, workshops, and intimate partner violence support groups.

Aggregate Reporting

Toronto Public Health is committed to working to develop a coordinated approach to data collection and reporting related to the Downtown HART Hub. To achieve this objective, in July 2025, Toronto Public Health will convene Hub partners to establish a Downtown HART Hub Data Working Group to determine the scope and goals of aggregate reporting. The working group will meet monthly to finalize a list of indicators for each of the HART Hub programs. Indicators will focus on client uptake of programs and services, experience, and outcomes, such as *Client Visits*, *Number of Referrals*, *Substance Use Treatment Initiation* and *Case Management Outcomes*. This work is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2025.

The finalized indicators will inform planning and help monitor progress and impact of the Downtown HART Hub services and programs. Toronto Public Health will continue to explore how to collaboratively share and report on HART Hub data both internally and publicly.

Outreach Coordination

Outreach efforts are an important component of the transition to the HART Hub model, especially in the first year and in the disaggregated model. Toronto Public Health is working in different ways to coordinate and complement other City outreach teams to connect clients to the Downtown HART Hub services.

In addition to the City leveraging an outreach model to initiate some of the Downtown HART Hub programs in year one, Toronto Public Health also provides harm reduction focused outreach. Toronto Public Health collaborates closely with a range of parties including, Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS), Toronto Police Services (TPS), Social Development (SD), Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), Business Improvement Areas (BIA), Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), and prioritizes its outreach services in areas with the highest concentration of people in need.

Multiple sources of data and information are used to coordinate Toronto Public Health's outreach teams, including HART Hub teams and harm reduction teams. The Toronto Overdose Information System (TOIS) provides timely data on overdose activity across the city. A provincially mandated harm reduction database is used to capture updates from outreach staff including critical incident reports, hotspot activity, and any emerging issues. Encampment location information, as well as data from consumption and treatment sites (CTS), are also used to inform outreach teams servicing high-density areas where people use drugs. Together, these data sources allow Toronto Public Health to remain responsive and evidence-driven in its outreach efforts.

Toronto Public Health coordinates regularly with other City outreach teams through its participation in several committees and networks. These include the Consumption Treatment Service and Outreach Coordination Committee, led by Ontario Health, where agencies meet to align outreach strategies and ensure coverage across the city. Additional networks include the Harm Reduction Network, Yonge Dundas Safety Network, TTC Interdivisional Table, Street to Homes partner meetings as well as emergency care coordination for Indigenous community evacuations during extreme weather events. These tables provide opportunities to share information, align outreach strategies, and identify service gaps.

As planning for the Downtown HART Hub advances, Toronto Public Health will continue to work with City partners to strengthen coordination efforts across outreach teams to improve data and information sharing and reduce service duplication.

Toronto Public Health Strategic Impact

This report provides an update on the development of the Downtown HART Hub and advances the following priorities of the [Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan 2024-2028](#):

- #3 Promote the conditions to support positive mental health and reduce the harms of substance use
 - (a) Deliver public health interventions that respond to the drug toxicity epidemic.
 - (d) Deliver public health interventions that promote mental health.
- #4 Advocate to advance health equity
 - (b) Collaborate with partners cross multiple sectors to address local health needs.
 - (c) Share evidence, advocate and collaborate to influence actions that impact populations health.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Downtown HART Hub Programs - Interim and Permanent Programming Overview