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ONTARIO EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN EVERY CORNER OF THE PROVINCE

WHITBY — The Ontario government is investing \$4.75 million to expand the "One Stop Talk" virtual "walk-in" counselling program to connect children, youth and their families with more convenient and timely ways to access mental health counselling no matter where they live. "Our government is making it easier and more convenient for children and youth in every corner of the province to access mental health care," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "This program offers modern, convenient options for youth to connect to help in ways that they're used to communicating."

The "One Stop Talk" service offers convenient ways to talk to a clinician by phone, video conference, text and chat without an appointment. The program began as a pilot in November 2022 with six participating mental health organizations and is now being expanded to additional organizations and their waitlisted patients. When fully implemented, the program will eventually be available to all children, youth and their families.

The government is also significantly expanding the number of Youth Wellness Hubs across the province to make it faster and easier for young people to connect to mental health and substance use support, primary care, social services, and more. Through the Addictions Recovery Fund, the government is adding eight new youth wellness hubs to the 14 that were created since 2020, bringing the total to 22 across the province.

These hubs help fill the gap in youth addictions services and also provide children and youth aged 12 to 25 a range of other services, such as vocational support, education services, housing and recreation and wellness.

"Through our Roadmap to Wellness, we are focused on fixing our complicated and disjointed mental health and addictions care system once and for all," said Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. "Significantly expanding our network of Youth Wellness Hubs is one more way we're creating a system where Ontarians of all ages have convenient access to the highest-quality mental health and addictions supports, when and where they need them."

Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness plan – the province's mental health and addictions strategy – has so far provided \$525 million to use innovative solutions to improve the quality and access to mental health supports while shortening wait times and removing gaps in service. The plan is built on four central pillars – improving quality, expanding existing services, implementing innovative solutions and improving access – that are designed to work together to support the delivery of the services people need, where and when they need them.

Quick Facts

The eight new Youth Wellness Hubs will be in Algoma Region, Kingston Frontenac Lennox and Addington, London-Middlesex, Sagamok Anishnabek First Nation, Sarnia-Lambton, Sudbury, Thorncliffe Park, and West Toronto.

One of these new Youth Wellness Hubs will be located at Sagamok Anishnabek First Nation and will offer culturally safe and appropriate primary care, mental health and addictions services to Indigenous youth in and around that community.

Ontario's mental health and addictions strategy, Roadmap to Wellness, was released in March 2020. It sets out a vision for an Ontario where everyone has access to high quality mental health and addictions treatment and support, when and where they need it.