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ONTARIO APPROVES TRANSITION OF NINE DRUG INJECTION SITES INTO TREATMENT HUBS

TORONTO — The Ontario government is protecting the safety of children and families while improving access to recovery and treatment services by approving the transition of nine drug injection sites that are located within 200 metres of schools and licensed child-care centres into Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs. These HART Hubs, located in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Kitchener, Guelph and Thunder Bay, are part of the province's \$378 million investment to support the creation of a total of 19 new HART Hubs across the province. "We have heard loud and clear from families across Ontario that drug injection sites near schools and child-care centres are making our communities less safe," said Sylvia Jones, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Through these nine new Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hubs, part of our government's \$378 million investment to create a total of 19 hubs across the province, we are taking the next step in our plan to keep communities safe while improving access to mental health and addictions services." In response to serious safety concerns raised by communities, families and parents, Ontario is taking the next step to create a system of care that prioritizes community safety, treatment and recovery. To support these goals, the province passed the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act and the Community Care and Recovery Act to prohibit the operation of drug injection sites within 200 metres of a school or child-care centre. Each provincially funded site was given the opportunity to submit a proposal to transition to a HART Hub and all nine applications have now

been approved. "We are investing more than any government in Ontario's history to create a nation-leading system of mental health and addictions care," said Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. "The new HART Hubs will give people struggling with addiction the support and treatment services they need to achieve lasting recovery." By March 31, 2025, the nine approved drug injection sites will be transitioned to HART Hubs. These hubs will be eligible, on average, to receive up to four times more funding to support treatment and recovery under the model than they receive from the province as a consumption site. To assist with transitioning, the sites will also receive one time funding for start up costs. HART Hubs, similar to existing hub models in Ontario that have successfully provided people with care, will reflect regional priorities by connecting people with complex needs to comprehensive treatment and preventative services. These include a range of services to meet local needs such as primary care, mental health services including addiction care and support, social services and employment support. HART Hubs will also add an estimated 375 highly supportive housing units, in addition to addiction recovery and treatment beds, that will help thousands of people each year transition to more stable long-term housing. Applications for the remaining HART Hubs are under review and will be announced in the coming weeks. All HART Hubs will have the goal of being operational by April 1, 2025. Through Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care and building on the Roadmap to

Wellness, the province is taking action to connect individuals to integrated mental health and addictions services, where and when it is needed. The creation of HART Hubs is being done in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. With a focus on treatment and recovery, HART Hubs will not offer so-called safer supply, supervised drug consumption or needle exchange programs. As part of the Community Care and Recovery Act, 2024 and the Safer Streets, Stronger Communities Act, the province has prohibited municipalities and/or local boards from participating in any so-called safer supply program or applying for an exemption for the decriminalization of illegal drugs. Through the Roadmap to Wellness, Ontario is investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to fill gaps in mental health and addictions care, create new services and expand programs. Through the Roadmap to Wellness, the Addictions Recovery Fund and other initiatives, the government recently made the following investments: \$124 million over the next three years as part of Budget 2024 to sustain more than 380 addiction recovery beds and models of treatment like mobile mental health clinics. \$152 million over three years for supportive housing to assist individuals facing unstable housing conditions and experiencing mental health and addictions challenges. More than \$22 million over four years to create 10 new Youth

Wellness Hubs that the government is adding to the network of 22 hubs already opened since 2020, bringing the total number of Youth Wellness Hubs to 32 across the province. More than \$650 million in annual funding for the Homelessness Prevention Program and \$41.5 million for the Indigenous Supportive House Program, which the government increased by \$202 million annually in the 2023 provincial budget. Up to \$16 million to support Police-Partnered Mobile Crisis Response Teams in over 50 communities across the province so that health care professionals can attend crisis situations. "These hubs are a vital part of our government's plan to ending encampments and providing wraparound services to help people rebuild their lives. A park or street corner is no place for someone struggling with mental health and addictions challenges. Through the new HART hubs, we're helping municipalities build safer, healthier communities where everyone can access the support they need." - Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing "Our government takes the safety of the people of Ontario extremely seriously. By transitioning to the HART Hub model, we are taking concrete action to reduce crime in several communities across the province and providing those struggling with addiction with help they need." - Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General "Today's approval of the recovery focused HART Hub model for Guelph is exciting news for our community. It's exciting due to the supports that can now set individuals on a positive trajectory of lifelong success free from

the addictions that are currently harming them, and in most cases impacting their family and friends as well. I thank the Ford government and Minister Jones for their continued support in these areas!" - Cam Guthrie, Mayor of Guelph "I am pleased to see the approval of the Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub in Hamilton, which will be led by Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre (HUC-CHC), a cornerstone organization in our city. By tackling mental health, addiction, homelessness, and barriers to care, this Hub will provide meaningful support to Hamilton's most vulnerable residents. Built on strong local partnerships, it will open pathways to treatment and recovery, housing stability, and social inclusion for those facing the greatest challenges in our community. I want to thank the provincial government for partnering with municipalities and local providers on this critical initiative and look forward to continuing our work together to tackle the urgent addiction, mental health and homelessness crises impacting our city." - Andrea Horwath, Mayor of Hamilton "This provincial funding is a critical step towards supporting community needs for addiction treatment. Ottawa has a strong commitment to helping residents through the recovery journey. This funding will help to keep our communities safe and to provide wrap-around services to those who can benefit from addiction treatments." - Mark Sutcliffe, Mayor of Ottawa "Ontario's big cities need a range of tools available to them to tack-

le the challenges of mental health and addictions impacting both residents and our communities. Today, we are grateful for investments in evidence-based prevention, outreach, addiction treatment, and healthcare services through the Province's announcement to fully-fund one of those tools - the HART Hub proposal for Waterloo Region. Located in Downtown Kitchener, Community Health Caring Kitchener-Waterloo, has taken a leadership role and will be working to build on our collaborative network of partners to support vulnerable people in our community. With today's announcement of support from the Province, we can continue to build a community for everyone where, together, we take care of the world around us and each other." - Berry Vrbanovic, Mayor of Kitchener "We are encouraged that our community's application has been successful in securing a HART hub for Waterloo Region as we all work together to provide much-needed supports in our community. This funding will help increase access to primary care, mental health and addiction care, housing and social supports. The HART hub co-leads, the House of Friendship and Community Healthcaring Kitchener-Waterloo, will be working closely with community partners to implement and share further HART hub plans, ensuring access to support in Waterloo Region for those who need it most." - Karen Redman, Chair of Waterloo Region