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# MESA INITIATIVE

## PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY PROPOSAL

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### Introduction

The County of Renfrew remains steadfast in its mission to serve the most vulnerable members of our community with compassion, innovation, and purpose. Our residents face a complex intersection of housing insecurity, mental health challenges, and substance use crises.

The Mesa initiative exists because we believe that everyone deserves dignity, care, and an opportunity to thrive. Mesa is not only an emergency response it's a coordinated, trauma-informed, and compassionate system transformation designed to meet people where they are, when they need it most.

### Provincial Partnership

The County of Renfrew is deeply grateful for the Province of Ontario's ongoing support in addressing the systemic issues of homelessness, mental health, and addiction. Mesa exemplifies what is possible when municipal innovation aligns with provincial partnership producing measurable, life-changing results for individuals and communities.

We invite the Province to continue this collaboration by providing sustained annual funding to strengthen and expand the Mesa initiative in 2026 and beyond. Consistent with the similarly funded programs in Lambton, Thunder Bay and Simcoe County.

### Proposal Summary

The County of Renfrew has a proven record of addressing complex human service challenges through innovation, integration, and collaboration – from the Community Paramedic Program to the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (VTAC).

Mesa builds on this legacy. It is not just a program; it is a movement to reimagine care for those facing homelessness, mental health crises, and addiction. Mesa coordinates paramedics, crisis mental health workers, housing case managers, and community agencies into one unified response network.

To sustain and expand Mesa's life-changing impact, we are seeking an annual provincial investment of \$2.5 million beginning in 2026. This investment will ensure continuity of service, expansion of outreach capacity, and integration with complementary community health and housing supports. Aligned with the concurrently funded programs and the HART Hub.

## Operating Budget Request

Total Annual Investment: \$2.5 million

Category	Description	Funding Required
System Design & Coordination	Staff and administrative support for program design, integration, and inter-agency coordination.	\$500,000
Mesa Operations	Funding for two operational teams consisting of paramedics and crisis mental health workers, including mobile outreach and 24/7 response capacity.	\$2,000,000

## Program Activities and Expansion Priorities

Mesa's 2026 priorities are focused on expansion, prevention, and system sustainability. Key new activities include:

### Mobile Outreach and Response Expansion

- Launch two new mobile outreach units providing integrated mental health and addiction support across rural and remote regions of Renfrew County.
- Extend operational hours to ensure 24/7 rapid response capability, reducing reliance on emergency departments and police intervention.

### Transitional and Supportive Housing Partnerships

- Partner with Carefor, municipalities, and housing providers to expand bridge housing and supportive housing options, connecting Mesa clients directly to stable accommodation.
- Develop wraparound support teams to help individuals maintain housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness.

### Integrated Data and Evaluation System

- Implement a shared digital platform for Mesa partners to track service delivery, outcomes, and client progress in real time.
- Utilize data insights to identify emerging needs, reduce duplication, and strengthen cross-sector collaboration.

### Wellness and Workforce Support

- Introduce a staff wellness and resiliency program to support Mesa's front-line workforce, addressing mental health impacts of crisis response.
- Offer ongoing trauma-informed care training for all Mesa partners to maintain consistent, compassionate service standards.

### Community and System Partnerships

- Strengthen collaboration with primary care, Ontario Health Teams (OHTs), and community mental health agencies to ensure seamless referral pathways.
- Establish a regional knowledge-sharing network to help other municipalities replicate the Mesa model across Ontario.

## Why it Matters

Many Renfrew County communities are rural, remote, and geographically isolated, with limited access to health and social services. The convergence of mental health crises, substance use, and homelessness has created growing pressure on emergency systems and social supports.

In response, the County launched Mesa in early 2024 as an innovative, evidence-informed pilot project. Mesa coordinates municipal departments – Emergency Services, Community Services, and Development and Property – alongside community partners to deliver integrated, trauma-informed care tailored to local needs.

## Impacts and Outcomes

After its first year of operation, Mesa has demonstrated measurable success and system-wide benefits:

- 60% reduction in suspected opioid-related deaths and a 62% decrease in opioid-related emergency department visits when compared to 2024.
- 283 unique clients served and 5,354 documented visits, ensuring consistent follow-up with individuals experiencing complex health and social challenges.
- 743 diversions from 911 calls or emergency room visits, easing the burden on emergency services through early identification and management of health and social needs.
- Improved trust, engagement, and housing readiness among individuals previously disconnected from mainstream services, leading to referrals for addiction treatment and coordinated case management with housing providers, hospitals, and shelters.

In 2026, Mesa will build on these successes through expanded outreach, housing coordination, and system integration.

## Vision for 2026 and Beyond

Mesa is more than a service – it's a blueprint for hope and systemic change. It redefines how communities respond to vulnerability, transforming crisis intervention into compassionate connection and long-term stability.

With sustained provincial investment, Mesa will:

- Expand its reach to serve more residents across Renfrew County.
- Continue to reduce emergency pressures while improving outcomes for individuals in crisis.
- Serve as a provincial model of innovation, integration, and compassion – demonstrating what is possible when governments and communities work together.

*By investing in Mesa, the Province of Ontario is not just funding a program – it is building a future where every person has the opportunity to thrive.*