
MINISTRY OF HEALTH / MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTIONS

A PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL INVESTMENT: SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR MESA

Thank you

The County of Renfrew is proud of its mission to serve the most vulnerable members of our community with compassion, innovation, and purpose. Our communities face a complex intersection of housing shortages, mental health crises, and addiction challenges. The Mesa initiative exists because we believe everyone deserves dignity, care, and an opportunity to thrive.

We thank the Province of Ontario for its unwavering support and commitment to solving systemic issues. Associate Minister Tibollo's willingness to engage with Mesa demonstrates the power of shared purpose. Together, we can address these challenges not just for Renfrew County, but for communities across Ontario.

Proposal

The County of Renfrew has a proven track record of solving complex problems through innovation and collaboration. Mesa is the latest example of this approach. Mesa is not just a program; it's a movement to reimagine how we care for those who need it most. It's a coordinated, trauma-informed, and compassionate model that aligns our resources with the expertise of community partners to deliver the right support at the right time in the right place.

The Mesa team, consisting of paramedics and crisis mental health workers, is ensuring that the health and social needs of homeless individuals in Renfrew County are met. The team provides daily check-ins to individuals staying in temporary motels and a warming center, supporting their efforts to secure long-term, stable housing. To sustain Mesa and its life-changing impact, we are seeking an annual provincial investment of \$2.5 million. This funding will allow us to continue transforming lives and creating systemic change.

Here's how:

Operational Funding

- Staff support for Mesa system design and coordination: \$500,000
- Program support for Mesa operations (2 teams with dedicated paramedics and crisis mental health workers): \$2 million

The County of Renfrew continues to demonstrate innovation through initiatives such as the Community Paramedic Program and the Renfrew County Virtual Triage Assessment Centre, successful models that benefit both our residents and the Government of Ontario. To further our efforts, we are seeking annual funding of \$2.5 million from your government for Mesa.

Background

Our communities, many of which are rural, remote, and often isolated from service providers, are grappling with urgent mental health, substance use, overdose, and addiction crises. These challenges strain service capacity to deliver essential health and social services and have a profound impact on people's lives. In response to the urgency of these complex challenges, Mesa was initiated in early 2024 as an emergent response to address critical needs of our most vulnerable populations.

Mesa was designed as a coordinated and integrated approach to address the intersections of the homelessness, mental health and addiction crises. It is an innovative and evidence-informed collaborative model that focuses on compassionate, trauma-informed care and local needs. This interdepartmental municipal approach aligns Emergency Services, Community Services and Development and Property resources with community partners' expertise and programs. Mesa works collaboratively to coordinate supports and forge new service pathways for vulnerable community members.

Impacts and Outcomes

Operational for approximately nine months, Mesa is already having a profound impact on our most vulnerable populations and structural systems. More than 3,200 calls have been diverted from emergency departments, overdose deaths have been significantly reduced, and individuals have received appropriate, compassionate care within their own community.

Beyond the numbers, Mesa's impact extends to system-wide transformation:

- In April 2024, we hosted the Affordable Housing Summit, sparking new partnerships and innovative housing ideas for Renfrew County

- By July 2024, we partnered with Carefor to create supportive bridge housing in Pembroke
- In November 2024, we partnered with municipalities and community organizations to establish a warming center, offering a low-barrier option for homeless individuals with high acuity to help end encampments

Imagine What's Possible

At its core, Mesa is about more than just solving problems. It's about building trust, fostering hope, and creating pathways to dignity and self-reliance. We're not just asking for funding; we're inviting the Province of Ontario to join us in a vision of what's possible when we come together with a shared purpose.

With your investment, Mesa will expand its reach to save more lives, serve as a model of innovation and collaboration for other communities, and provide lasting solutions to Ontario's housing, mental health, and addiction crises. Let's work together to turn today's challenges into tomorrow's triumphs. By investing in Mesa, we're not just funding a program, we're creating a future where everyone has the chance to thrive.