



For Immediate Release

## Youth agency and community health centre announce groundbreaking health clinic for street-involved youth

**Ottawa, October 28, 2009**—The Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa (YSB) and the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre (SHCHC) today opened the doors to a health clinic for street-involved youth. The two agencies' unique partnership and groundbreaking approach bring together primary care, mental health services and addictions treatment in one place.

"This is a great partnership: YSB's youth focus and know-how combined with the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre's health expertise will make care more accessible and more effective for street-involved youth," said Alex Munter, YSB executive director. "This is a group who disproportionately uses the health care system but is often underserved."

"Sandy Hill Community Health Centre is honored to work with Youth Services Bureau and the Champlain Local Health Integration Network on such a ground breaking project that benefits the local community," said David Gibson, Executive Director of SHCHC. "Our mission is to provide access to health care and improve the health of area residents. This youth clinic offers a unique integration of services under one roof—at a convenient location for street-involved youth."

"The clinic is an important investment in health care for a high-needs population," said Dr. Robert Cushman, CEO of the Champlain Local Health Integration Network. "The project addresses a number of health priorities in our region – improving access to primary health care, strengthening mental health and addictions services, and reducing unnecessary emergency room visits."

In January, the YSB and the SHCHC called for the Government of Ontario to fund a full-time health clinic for street-involved youth that would improve services and save the health care system money.

The Champlain Local Health Integration Network, through realigned and new sources of funding, has provided \$250,000 to open and operate the health clinic. This investment will bring more preventative care and other important services to a vulnerable group of young people.

"These services are much needed and long overdue," said Alex Munter, YSB executive director. "We are thankful for the support from the Ontario government, through the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, to get the clinic up and running. This is a great start to a service we are sure will adapt and grow to meet the needs of youth, while taking pressure off emergency rooms and ambulances."

Quality health care is about much more than the basic care that can be difficult for street-involved youth to access. It is about providing young people with the supports they need to



improve their chances of becoming healthy and happy adults. This health clinic will provide services such as a nurse practitioner, assistance for youth without health cards, and case workers in the areas of addictions and mental health.

**Background:**

A report compiled by KPMG Canada on behalf of YSB and the SHCHC found that:

- Street-involved youth experience complex issues relating to mental health, addictions, and chronic pain with few youth-friendly supports.
- Street-involved youth have higher mortality rates than youth who are stably housed.
- Approximately 35% of emergency room visits by street-involved youth could have been diverted to a primary care system.
- Leading practices in other Canadian cities show that it is possible to deliver services in a way that is more cost-effective and attuned to the needs of this vulnerable population.

Based on best practice research, KPMG Canada recommended that the Government of Ontario fund an expanded service for street-involved youth that would provide expertise in dealing with youth, continuity of services, and comprehensive care.

They also found that a fully funded clinic would not only improve care for street-involved youth, it would save the health care system up to \$265,000 in the first year by reducing risks and deferring emergency room visits.