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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT**

**Annual General Meeting**

**September 2023**

For all of York Hills staff, this was a year of necessary reflection and imposed evaluation of every aspect of our services. From policies and procedures to every standard of practice, we were all tasked to leave “no stone unturned” in our reflections and reviews. In order to assure our service delivery and business practices met the highest of standards, we set into achieving our first CCA accreditation status as an amalgamated organization. The work of both staff and management, with oversight from Lisa Chotowetz (Director of Quality Assurance and Strategic Initiatives) was nothing less than impressive. Even our Board of Directors was called upon to assure alignment to best practice standards and they did so with the ease and confidence that defines them across all of their work. I am happy to report that York Hills is how a fully accredited children’s mental health facility. Thank you and congratulations to one and all as we already have embarked on preparing ourselves for the next accreditation review in 4 years’ time.

As it is the case across our sector, this year saw some new people join our organization and others move on to other opportunities. It is always sad for us to say good-bye to staff that have truly given of themselves but we also rejoice in the fact that we have had some truly talented, caring people join our teams. With our new recruits we seem to always gain fresh perspectives and insights. They support us to remain on our quest to diversify our organization and assure that York Hills responds favorably to the needs of everyone within the very diverse community we have been tasked to service. We send a thank you to our HR Manager, Yvonne Namasivayam, who was busy with recruitment and orientations, amongst her many other assigned and unassigned tasks. Within this year, we launched some new policies and further refined some of our existing ones. We worked hard on building our staff retention strategy to include adjustments in benefits, wages and other staff-related perks and protocols. Our vision towards the future remained one of evolution, to always do better and to reach even more people in need.

This year saw our newly formed DEIB Committee launch with both staff and management representation from across the organization. A special shout-out to the Co-Chairs of that committee, Michelle Song and Janet MacQuarrie, for working with the team to assure that we prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion as part of our strategic planning. The committee set into the process of recruitment of a consultant to assure alignment of their work to the best practice models. The team completed an employment equity survey and is busy setting their priorities for the coming year. We believe that there is so much more to be achieved but also take comfort in knowing we have truly achieved so much in such a short period.

As we further transitioned the delivery of some of our services into a hybrid model (virtual and on-site) we continued to reflect and perfect this craft. We are learning that some services work well virtually and others not so much. Our strength remains in our ability and willingness to adapt and change as needed. Under the leadership of Joanne Pariseau (Manager of Operations), and with the flexibilities afforded by the hybrid model, we have consolidated our offices into two main locations (Aurora/Bloomington and Richmond Hill/Leslie Street) with the hopes of creating even more efficiencies into the future. Our Here to Help line and walk-in service continued to greet people with a barrier-free response. A special thanks to Nancy Devine, Janet MacQuarrie, and all the other managers and staff that have supported the delivery of a much-needed quick response service.

Our Community Transition Fund (CTF) was fully utilized in this last fiscally funded year. That’s 1.8 million dollars to provide services to children and youth from across the province that are presenting with very complex mental health needs. The CTF Committee, under the leadership of Erin Thornton as coordinator, with representation from individuals from across the province has screened and approved dozens of requests. This committee underscores how a group of devoted people, from all corners of Ontario, can collectively work together to assure services reach the far corners of our province. A special thank you to the membership and our two Co-Chairs, Gill Weintraub and Megan Simpson.

With the support of Carolynne Warton and Pam Snelgrove, our work on Georgina Island has continued in force. The team has adapted and evolved the services to assure that they best met the needs in a way that is user friendly. We have appealed to the Ministry for more financial support in order to better meet the needs of this community. Our Kuumba service has taken flight as the referral base has grown to a service that is tailored for the Black Community. Special thanks to Chantel Simm, our dedicated Child and Family therapist, for her work in this area.

Our DBT Day Treatment classroom has successfully completed its first year of service with much learning behind it. Round 2 of the program will be commencing this month with a new-found investment of resources to assure delivery is well rounded and better meets the need of everyone involved. A special thank you to Melissa Louka, Sarah Clarke and Teresa Knibb for their huge investment in assuring service delivery remains evidence-informed and meets all best practice standards. This trail-blazing team will be presenting at this year’s CMHO conference, sharing their learnings with others with hopes of moving the field forward.

Our newly launched collaborative with Southlake Regional Health Centre, dedicated to supporting children and youth with eating disorders, is a huge step forward in providing support in an area of growing need and complexity. This work is critical since COVID waitlists have burgeoned to unmanageable levels for our hospital team. Thank you, Robin Marshment and Clara Kim, for your support in both developing and launching this program together with our partners at Southlake.

As we headed into the 2023-24 school year, we wanted to improve Day Treatment Service delivery at the point of transitions (a major gap identified by so many across our sector). We set into developing a new Transitions program dedicated to ensuring this process is consistent and includes evidence-based practices that ensure client/family success. Our newly launched transition team is an exciting new endeavour in an area that has been a struggle for our service delivery teams for so many years. We know that clients generally struggle with making the transition to our services and from our services and have been working to make these transitions more supportive as they are a major integral part of the client’s mental health and academic journey. We have known for years that the progress a child or youth makes in our program often needs some additional support to assure that progress gets transferred to the regular school system. Teachers receiving the students need training and supports to best receive the students and this team will be able to provide this. This new team includes Domenica Giacomini (Day Treatment Program Manager), Shannon Dewaal (Program Coordinator), Vanessa Vega (Child and Youth Worker), Vibhuti Jethava (Speech and Language Pathologist), and Dr. Goldie Miller (Consulting Psychologist for Day Treatment services). As we are still in the planning and development phase, more information to follow. Stay tuned!

Our partnership with York Region Children’s Aid has remained strong and I believe will continue to flourish into next year. I am honored to report that I was invited to attend a YRCAS Core Department Redesign Team to support them in some of their work into the future. The work of our collaborative (YRCAS/York Hills) Live-In Treatment Program in Queensville has been a success and we are looking into bringing in another client. Thank you, Onika Haywood and Erin McKinlay, for your steadfast investment in delivering care from a trauma-informed approach. We have been approached by the Ministry to consider launching more such programs to better service some of the children and youth that do not appear able to access the level of Live-in Treatment support they are needing to manage.

This has been a year filled with many great opportunities, delivered by so many great staff and managers. As we found ourselves operating at capacity, meeting if not exceeding our targets, we continued to challenge ourselves to be the best we can be. Thank you, Simone Shindler, Kai ner Maa Pitanta, Lisa Chotowetz and Peter Mukundi, our esteemed Directors, for your continuing commitment to facing adversity head-on and assuring justice and integrity within all aspects of our services. To all our managers – Marcel Wegman, Donna Lamanna, Teresa Knibb, Sandy Cosentino, Anna Derbis, Alessandra Panico, Gail Brochu, Shilagh Ostrosser, Robin Marshment, Susan Blair-Drouin, Onika Haywood, Domenica Giacomini, Joanne Pariseau, Blythe McKinlay, Janet MacQuarrie, Yvonne Namasivayam and Tom Lam – thank you for keeping the agency and the needs of our clients and staff at the forefront of all that you do. A special thank you to our Ministry Supervisor, Rishma Mirshahi, for all the support and guidance you have provided throughout this last fiscal year. Last but not least, I want to recognize our committed members of our Board of Directors – Steven Rebellato (President), Richard Housen (Vice President), Gleb Matushansky (Secretary), Rajiv Kutty (Treasurer), Deandra Christopher, Anne Falomo, Noura Gharibo Shaw, Donna Healey, Shana Kapustin, Ruben Rodriguez, and Saba Ateyah – we could not deliver the services we deliver without your insights and direction.

I am proud to say that the client testimonials continue to roll in and cover off almost every aspect of our service delivery. I know the future holds exciting opportunities and growth as we continue to evolve our services to assure we respond to a spectrum of needs, no matter how intense and challenging they appear to be.

Respectfully submitted,

Dean Rokos

Chief Executive Officer