City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 24-103

To:	**Mayor and Members of Council**
From:	**Craig Desjardins, Director, Office of Strategy, Innovation & Partnerships**
Resource Staff:	**Don Aldridge, Health Innovation Lead**
Date of Meeting:	**March 19, 2024**
Subject:	**Health Innovation Kingston (HIYGK) Update- Continued Use of Portsmouth Town Hall to Support Start-up Businesses**

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 5. Drive Inclusive Economic Growth

Goal: 5.3 Diversify Kingston's economic base.

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the Health Innovation Kingston (HIYGK) project and request that Council allow the continued use of the Portsmouth Town Hall as a business incubator for health innovation / life science sector firms.

The HIYGK project received a $3 million grant from FedDev Ontario to fund a 3.5-year collaboration of seven community partners and the City of Kingston with the goal of developing new health sector companies in Kingston; ensuring that existing Kingston health sector companies thrive; and attracting new health sector companies to our community. Over the course of this grant funded project, 200+ new jobs have been created (on a target of 100); over 50 companies have been actively engaged; and 15 new companies have been established in Kingston.

As part of the project, the City of Kingston has contributed the use of the Portsmouth Town Hall as a facility to host new, local and recently attracted health and life science sector companies. Companies such as Hülpr, Neuma, and Indoc Research have used to space to support the growth of their firms and have “graduated” out to other locations in the city. PapEasy and Smart Biomedical are two new firms that hope to use the facility as they scale their businesses in Kingston.

While this grant expires on March 31, 2024, work is in progress, as identified in Council’s Strategic Plan, to secure the second phase of grant funding to explore life science and health innovation project opportunities that support the public good.

Recommendation:

That Council approve the continued use of the Portsmouth Town Hall, 623 King Street West, Kingston, Ontario, as a business incubator for the Kingston health and life sciences innovation ecosystem and offer Rent-free space to start-ups; and

That the Director, Business, Real Estate and Environment be authorized to execute agreements for the use of the Portsmouth Town Hall, on behalf of the City of Kingston, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, for a period of 2 years (April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2026).

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY DIRECTOR

Craig Desjardins
Director, Strategy, Innovation & Partnerships

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Lanie Hurdle, Chief Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	p.p. ☑
Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	☑
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Major Projects & Strategic Initiatives	Not required
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required

Options/Discussion

The $3 million, Health Innovation Kingston (HIYGK) project, 100% funded by a FedDev Ontario grant, has enabled the integration of Kingston's health innovation ecosystem and is now in its final month. The City of Kingston, and seven community project partners, have formed a collaborative team with Kingston's health and life sciences sector companies growing the number (over 50 companies were involved in HIYGK with 15 being created over the life of the project) and overall employment (200+ new jobs have been created on a FedDev target of 100). The project has exceeded all project targets. An extension of funding has been requested from FedDev to act as a bridge to a larger follow-on health and life sciences proposal in development.

The current HIYGK consortium consists of:

- Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC)
- St. Lawrence College (SLC)
- Kingston Economic Development
- The Queen's Centre for Advanced Computing (CAC)
- Queen's Partnerships and Innovation (QPI)
- The Dunin-Deshpande Queen's Innovation Centre (DDQIC)
- Queen's Ingenuity Labs
- The City of Kingston

Highlights of HIYGK include:

Each of the eight HIYGK partners has contributed to the overall success of the project in their own way; a few examples include:

- The DDQIC has developed the Build2Scale Health Bootcamp – a flexible, part-time accelerator program for entrepreneurial teams who are responding to unmet needs in the health sector. Teams must be comprised of at least two co-founders.
- The DDQIC has also created the Grow Rural Health Program that specifically looks for entrepreneurs with innovative ideas and solutions to improve the health landscape in rural communities. The program includes mentorship, financial support and a network of people that guide the ventures to success.
- The Kingston-Syracuse Pathway (KSP), led by QPI and Kingston Economic Development, has been reinvigorated and is now predominately a health and life sciences innovation program. This April 9th is Kingston's turn to host the annual KSP Conference – over 100 people are expected to attend.
- Through St. Lawrence College's Spark Program local companies have received go-to-market planning assistance; help in designing promotional materials, including videos; and overall mentoring.

- The CAC's primary role has been to develop software applications for companies that include: Caddie Health, Hülpr, Spectra Plasmonics, WEMA, PapEasy, Nephron Health, Dynamiris, and LenSense; as well as providing Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) for Waive-the-Wait.

Portsmouth Town Hall Utilization

Throughout the HIYGK project the Portsmouth Town Hall has been utilized as a landing site/incubator that has been a critical component in the success of several companies. The intent of the program is to provide companies with free office space as they get established, with the expectation that over time, they will be able to move out making room for others.

Hülpr and Neuma have been the primary tenants so far – their stories are highlighted below. Indoc Research has also taken advantage of the facilities, primarily as site for in-person team meetings for their local work-from-home team. Indoc is a Toronto-based health analytics company who now has a four-person footprint in Kingston.

In January of this year, Hülpr moved to a larger site to accommodate their amazing growth. They credit having had access to Portsmouth Town Hall as being critical to their success.

Neuma is "graduating" and will be moving out at the end of March making space for Smart Biomedical. Smart Biomedical is an early stage (pre-revenue) venture founded by four surgeons from Kingston Health Science Centre that design better medical devices, starting with their patented "Smart Drain" that replaces traditional chest tubes.

PapEasy, also highlighted below, is scheduled to move into the Town Hall in April/May of this year. The Town Hall will act as their North American headquarters for sales and distribution.

Having access to the Portsmouth Town Hall has been an important element of the HIYGK program and has allowed the City to leverage FedDev funds based on the in-kind market value of the Town Hall.

Individual Success Stories:

The HIYGK project has involved dozens of companies. Below are short overviews of several companies representing the development of new hardware technology; a new approach for low-cost high-throughput computing; a new health services company; an industry/academia partnership; and a new approach to treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

I – Spectra Plasmonics

Spectra Plasmonics was founded by three Queen's students and came out of the Dunin-Deshpande Queen's Innovation Centre Build2Scale program just prior to HIYGK. Using hand-held Raman Spectrometry technology, they have developed a device that allows for rapid field

testing of the street drugs that are fueling the opioid epidemic. The Spectra solution detects “contaminants” in street drugs, such as fentanyl, alerting the user to the increased risk and thus reducing the number of drug overdoses, emergency room visits, and deaths. Organizations focused on harm reduction are their primary market – safe injection sites, and first responders such as EMS and Police are early potential customers. Spectra has, at various stages, been supported by each of the eight HIYGK partners providing: business consulting and mentorship; product packaging and design services; regulatory compliance and patent guidance; and software development services. They have engaged in a City-funded field evaluation process with the support of the Integrated Care Hub (ICH) and as a result have expanded the range of their testing along with their accuracy. A second-generation device was recently launched providing better results at a significantly lower cost. Today the company has their first half dozen customers and is poised for rapid growth. As a result of contacts made via the Kingston-Syracuse Pathway they have closed their first US sale. Spectra Plasmonics is a home-grown success.

II – Distributive Corp.

Distributive is a local software company led by a former Royal Military College professor. At the core of their offering is an easy-to-use set of tools that allow their clients to harness the unused power of existing computers to perform computationally intensive calculations. Most personal computers are idle most of the time – the Distributive software kicks in when a computer is idle and utilizes these free computing cycles. When the “owner” of the computer wants to resume using their machine, it is instantly available for them. This is of value to hospitals who, aside from being strapped for funding, are also reluctant, for security reasons, to allow any data to leave their internal computer systems. Distributive also develops hospital-specific applications including a surgical block-scheduling system called Osler that optimizes the use of operating rooms. Osler is now in use in half a dozen hospitals in Ontario.

III – Hülpr

Hülpr (pronounced “helper”) has as its mission “helping people remain in their own homes longer”. They started as a patient transport service that picks clients up at their homes and takes them to their medical appointments. What differentiates Hülpr is that they remain with their clients during their appointment(s) providing an added level of personal care that many people, especially seniors, need. All their “drivers” are trained personal support workers (PSWs) or former nurses. In 2020 Hülpr consisted of the two founders, a part time driver, and one van. Three years later the company has approximately 33 custom vans and over 40 employees. They recently moved to significantly larger facilities that are better able to accommodate their rapid expansion.

Their business model is expanding to include added home services that range from something as simple as changing a light bulb for a resident through to coordinating major home repairs.

Hülpr@Home will provide a range of services needed to keep their clients remain independent, safe and healthy in their own home, and to provide their family with peace of mind. This new phase is being field tested now.

IV – WEMA & PapEasy Collaboration

WEMA (Women's Health Equity through Mobile Approaches) is a company founded by Dr. Karen Yeates from Queen's, focused on eradicating death from cervical cancer. Much of WEMA's past work has occurred in the third world where cervical cancer is a leading cause of death amongst women. WEMA is now applying their skills in Ontario.

PapEasy is a medical device company which is revolutionizing how Pap tests are performed. Their handheld device is minimally invasive and is designed for use both in a physician's office and for home screening for HPV and cervical cancer.

WEMA and PapEasy are launching a pilot program open to all women in the Kingston region to screen for HPV and cervical cancer at Providence Care Hospital starting this April – this is especially important as we face a paucity of family physicians resulting in many women not receiving potentially life-saving screening. The PapEasy testing kit requires only one sample for both screenings and is ultimately intended to be used in the privacy of your own home.

V – NEUMA – The Centre for Social Wellness

Neuma is an experiential learning centre dedicated to empowering individuals through the advancement of their emotional well-being using psychedelics (not used at the Town Hall however) and integrative living practices. They were born out of a shared vision to create an organization where people can explore alternative ways to heal, grow, and feel supported along their journey. Through this vision they are dedicated to advancing a more compassionate approach to the way we view our overall health and wellbeing – and it starts with something new.

Over the past two years Neuma has worked with St. Lawrence College to develop micro-credential courses to train therapists in the use of psychedelics for such things as the treatment of PTSD. They have also worked with the Queen's Psychedelics Research Collaborative.

Financial Considerations

Funds for the operation of the Portsmouth Town Hall are including in existing budgets. There are no additional costs anticipated as part of the use of this facility to support health and life science firms.

Contacts:

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Don Aldridge, Health Innovation Lead, Strategy, Innovation & Partnerships

Brandon Forrest, Director, Business, Real Estate & Environment

Exhibits Attached:

None