



Hospitals in High Growth Communities Encouraged by Budget Direction

Budget Signals that Government Set to Act on Election Commitment

March 25, 2008

Toronto (ON): Ontarians in the high growth regions of Durham, Halton, Peel, York, and Dufferin County and communities of Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph, Cambridge, West Ottawa, Fergus and Wellington North will begin to see their local hospitals gaining access to some additional resources to help meet local health care needs as the result of hospital growth funding announced as part of today's Provincial budget.

"We are pleased that the Government of Ontario has made clear its intention to act on their election commitment to provide growth funding to address population pressures on hospitals in high growth communities," said Ann Stapleford McGuire, Chair of the *Growing Communities Healthcare Alliance* (formerly the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance). "Adequate and on-going growth funding is desperately needed by hospitals in high growth communities to meet patient care needs on a timely basis."

During the 2007 Provincial election, the Liberal Government committed to providing \$100 million in annual operating funding for hospitals in Ontario's fastest growing communities to improve local access to care that would begin to address the widening gap in provincial funding for local hospital care in high growth communities. Today's Budget announced \$120 million over three years but details are needed on the multi-year rollout plan to implement the investment. Currently, the per resident gap in funding for Ontarians in high growth communities is \$267 which translates into an annual operating funding gap of \$1.5 billion for local hospital services. Over the last five years, the annual operating funding gap for hospital care in Ontario's high growth regions widened on average by \$77 million each year.

"Today's budget demonstrates the Province is working towards improving local access to hospital care in high growth communities," said McGuire. "To truly improve local access to hospital care in high growth communities, reduce wait times, improve access to emergency departments and have more nurses providing care, we will continue to work with the Government of Ontario and encourage them to provide most of the growth funding commitment up front, and equally important, quickly implement a population-needs-based funding formula to distribute funding to Ontario's hospitals."

The Growing Communities Healthcare Alliance is the collective voice of acute care and mental health hospitals in Ontario's fastest growing communities accounting for more than half of Ontario's annual population growth and home to more than four million Ontarians. The Alliance has been calling for adequate on-going hospital growth funding, allocating provincial healthcare resources on the basis of population needs and developing a health care growth plan for Ontario's high growth communities.

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