

Ontario Health Coalition

15 Gervais Drive, Suite 305, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1Y8

tel: 416-441-2502 fax: 416-441-4073 email: ohc@sympatico.ca www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

March 25, 2010

For Immediate Release

Ontario Health Coalition Response to Provincial Budget: McGuinty Must Stop “Over the Top” Crisis Rhetoric Used to Justify Hospital Cuts

Toronto – The Ontario Health Coalition is warning Ontarians that the rhetoric used by the McGuinty government to justify hospital cuts is “over the top” and is not supported by the facts.

Hospital spending as percentage of provincial health care spending: Hospital spending has been shrinking, not growing, as a percentage of health care spending since at least 1980. Since 1981 hospital spending has reduced from 52% of provincial health spending to 37% in 2008. (figures from government of Ontario financial statements):
1981- 52% 1995 – 44% 2003 – 39% 2008 – 37%

Ontario spends less on hospitals than other provinces: On a per-person basis, Ontario spends \$1.3 billion less than other provinces on hospitals. (source: OHA)

From 1990-2008 the number of hospital beds was cut by 45%. In that same period, the population grew by 25%. (source: OHA)

Hospital funding not keeping pace with inflation: The Ontario Hospital Association reports a 3% inflation rate for Ontario hospitals. This budget’s 1.5% increase for hospitals’ global budgets means a shortfall between hospital funding and inflation for the third year in a row. This will cause continued hospital service cuts.

“A 1.5% increase in global funding for hospitals means that there is a gap between hospital funding and inflation for the third year in a row,” said Dora Jeffries, chair of the Ontario Health Coalition. “The evidence is that hospitals cannot continue to sustain the underfunding of their global budgets. Deficits will continue and more services will be threatened.”

“Already local communities have lost vital hospital services,” noted Natalie Mehra, coalition director. “Entire hospitals are being closed or reduced to clinics. Services such as birthing, pain clinics, hospital beds, operating rooms, emergency departments, rehabilitation, palliative care, complex continuing care and many others have been slashed in recent months. The human costs are mounting. Patients have to wait longer for emergency care and travel greater distances for services, surgeries are delayed, and vast numbers of hospital staff are subject to constant job instability.”

“The McGuinty government is doing a disservice to the public health system by continuing over-the-top rhetoric about hospital funding that is not supported by the facts,” continued Ms. Jeffries. “Hospital funding is shrinking, not growing, as a percentage of health care spending. We are falling behind the rest of the country and patients are paying the price in new user fees, privatization, onerous travel requirements and reduced services.”

“The only people that gain from this type of confusing rhetoric are for-profit privatizers of hospital services that are being cut from local hospitals,” noted Ms. Mehra. “We encourage a real health care “conversation” by the McGuinty government, but one that is based on fact and proper democratic process, not crisis rhetoric. It is time for a reassertion of the values and priorities of Ontarians who overwhelmingly support and need their local hospitals.”