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**Health Minister’s hospital bed announcement welcome
but it is only a temporary band aid, more is needed: Health Coalition**

(Toronto) – “Although the Minister’s announcement today promising to extend funding for 1,235 ‘temporary’ hospital beds for one year is a positive step it is only a temporary band aid that will not solve the hospital overcrowding crisis,” said Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of the Ontario Health Coalition to news media today, “More is needed.”

Despite the Minister’s welcome announcement of 1,200 temporary hospital beds last fall, Ontario’s hospital overcrowding crisis continues. “Flu season is not the cause of the overcrowding crisis in hospitals,” Mehra said. “This crisis has been building for over a decade as a result of the most extreme cuts to hospital funding in Canada, resulting in severe bed shortages and hospitals stacked with sick people in halls and emergency rooms.”

Cuts have made it impossible for hospitals to plan and expand to meet the needs of our growing population. This announcement by Minister Hoskins must be put into the context of the crisis as it exists today – right now. Ontario communities have lived with the deepest cuts to hospital services compared to any other province in Canada. And, more alarmingly, the cuts are deeper than in any other country in the developed world.

Please note this fact: Ontario has the fewest hospital beds per person, the least amount of nursing care per patient, and the most severe hospital overcrowding in all of Canada.

Mehra warned that the government’s written fiscal plan is to increase funding for one year and then cut health care funding the year after the election. Leading into June’s provincial election, the Coalition is calling for all Ontario political parties to commit to developing a capacity plan to reopen hospital beds, operating rooms and services based on the population’s need for care. “No more opportunistic pre-election promises.”

“You can’t cut funding for a decade and then a year before an election start to put some – but not enough – money back in. People are suffering and we need a real plan to restore public hospital capacity to reasonable, rational, evidence-based levels to get us out of the ongoing crisis. Anything less is irresponsible and inhumane,” concluded Mehra.

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