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Attn: Assignment Editor

For Immediate Release

Doug Ford's planned cuts to provincial revenues on top of paying down deficit irresponsible and damaging: Health Coalition

Reacting to Finance Minister Vic Fedeli's speech today, the Ontario Health Coalition warned that dramatic cuts to provincial revenues planned by the Doug Ford government will be devastating if they are not stopped, and questioned why the government would pursue these cuts in light of their decision to choose a high deficit.

During the provincial election campaign, economist [Mike Moffatt](#) of Western University tracked Ford's proposed cuts to Ontario's revenues which are the funds that are used to pay for health care and all public services. The total is an eye-popping \$22 billion over the next 3- 4 years. This is more than Mike Harris cut in his first term, and may be the deepest cut to provincial funds in our history. The Coalition warns that since the Ford government has opted to use the high deficit figures it has selected, even though the pension plans themselves and many other experts dispute this approach, then it is irresponsible to intensify the pain by bringing in severe cuts to provincial revenues at the same time. This, the Coalition notes, will add pressure for severe cuts to services. Moreover, a large proportion of Ford's proposed revenue cuts are made up of tax cuts and other measures that primarily benefit the wealthy at a time when the wealthiest are the only ones benefitting from periods of economic growth and government has an important role in mitigating growing inequality through social programs that improve the standard of living for the majority of people.

"It's like facing a shortfall in your household budget and then deciding at the same time that you are going to purposefully make a massive cut to your income. It makes no sense...unless you purposefully want to create a crisis," noted Natalie Mehra, executive director. "If the Ford government is not trying to create a crisis in order to lay the groundwork for privatization, then why would they plan draconian cuts to provincial funding for public services at the same time as choosing a high deficit number to pay off?" she asked. "Ontarians believed the election promise to restore services and end the long waits for health care, and we will insist that Doug Ford to live up to that."

The Coalition notes that Ontario has already cut and downsized its public hospitals for decades. In fact, no other province in Canada, and virtually no other country in the developed world has cut as deeply as this province. Already Ontario has the lowest public hospital funding in the country. We have fewer hospital beds left than any other province. Ontario has the lowest level of nursing care per patient, occupancy (overcrowding) levels in hospitals that are unparalleled anywhere in Canada or Europe. Here, patients are pushed out of hospitals more quickly than in other provinces, and as a consequence, Ontario has the highest levels of hospital re-admission in the country. One in ten patients ends up back in hospital after they are discharged. As overcrowding has reached crisis levels, violence in hospitals has spiked. 30,000 people are waiting for long-term care placements and care levels are too low to provide for their needs. The Coalition is calling on government to rebuild and restore services, not cut and privatize. Charts and sources are available on our website at:

<http://www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca/index.php/health-system-facts-trends/funding/>

"There are not billions of dollars of "efficiencies" to be found. Ontario's health care has been cut beyond our ability to provide services that people need," noted Ms. Mehra. "Even if all of the hospital CEO salaries were cut by \$100 thousand, for example, it would only generate a few million, not enough to rebuild and restore the services we need."

This summer the Ford government announced cuts to the OHIP+ program that was to provide universal drug coverage for all Ontarians under 25 years old. They also cut planned mental health care funding by more than \$380 million.

The Coalition is warning that billions of dollars in revenue cuts planned by Ford would result in another round of damaging health care restructuring including mega-mergers of hospitals, privatization of long-term care which has already proved to

be a major problem, further privatization of home care, privatization of hospital diagnostics and surgeries, more user fees and 2-tier health care, and longer waits. These plans are already being discussed in policy circles, the Coalition notes.

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