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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

## Ontario's community hospital cuts worst in Canada: Report

Toronto – The data is irrefutable. Ontario's cuts to hospital nursing care and hospital beds are the most severe of anywhere in Canada. In a new report *Beyond Limits: Ontario's Deepening Hospital Cuts Crisis* released today, the Ontario Health Coalition finds that the cuts to community hospital care are a result of eight consecutive years of global funding for the province's hospitals. Now, heading into the ninth year in a row of real-dollar cuts to hospitals' global budgets, Ontario's community hospitals are now lagging behind virtually all other provinces in every reasonable measure of hospital funding. The coalition's report includes an updated list tracking hospital service and staffing cuts in every region of the province for the last four years. Among the key findings:

- Ontario's government has cut hospitals' global budgets in real-dollar terms for 8 years in a row. If the government does not change course, 2016 -17 will be the ninth consecutive year of hospital cuts – the longest period of hospital cuts in the history of Ontario's public hospitals.
- Ontario now has the least amount of nursing care per average patient (including RN and RPN care).
- Ontario has the fewest hospital beds left of all provinces in Canada, and lags far below the other provinces.
- Ontario has the highest hospital readmission rates in Canada, and they are rising.
- By every reasonable measure, Ontario's hospital funding levels are at or near the bottom of the country and far from the average of the other provinces.
- Cuts are resulting a crisis of overcrowding; cancelled surgeries because there are no beds; too-early discharges; high re-admission rates; infections; violence; ambulance delays; understaffing; and compromised safety for patients and staff alike.

"That people are sleeping on stretchers in hallways in every major city in Ontario, sometimes for days at a time, is a travesty. Small and rural hospitals are being eviscerated despite all evidence regarding community need. The fact that staffing and funding are being cut to unsafe levels without any reasonable benchmarks shows just how far beyond any limits Ontario's hospital cuts have gone," said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition. "This issue should be considered the serious crisis that it truly is, by our policy makers."

Student interns from Ryerson University's nursing program, Patricia Julian and Celine Yu helped to research and compile the list of cuts. They expressed shock at what they found. "Among the enormous cuts to hospitals in the largest cities of Ontario, what stood out to me the most were the cuts to mental health services," noted Patricia Julian, citing cuts from Hamilton's east end psychiatric clinic to London Ontario where mental health patients have been sleeping on the emergency department floor while waiting for hospital beds to open up. "These cuts are devastating to an already vulnerable population." "Northern and small community's hospitals have been victim to numerous cuts and even the risk of closure," reported Celine Yu. "These closures and cuts risk patients' lives and ultimately the health of entire communities."

"Like every Ontarian, we have been appalled at the money that is taken away from care in exorbitant executive salaries, consultants, PR people and ballooning managements," noted Ms. Mehra. "But even taking this into account, Ontario's government still funds our communities' hospitals at a lower rate by every measure than other provinces and has cut care levels beyond any comparable jurisdiction. This underlines the facts that our government can and should choose to restore services and funding, and to ensure that funding goes to actual care and vital support services that patients rely upon."

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