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Attn: Assignment Editor

Cross-Ontario Hospital Deficit “Hot Spots” Map & Health Pre-Budget Analysis Released: Ontario Health Coalition

Toronto - In a press conference at Queen’s Park today, the Ontario Health Coalition released a media briefing note and a map of hospital deficit “hot spots” to watch in advance of Ontario’s budget scheduled for Tuesday. The coalition outlined issues to watch in the upcoming provincial budget noting that there will be significant controversies surrounding the budget this year for major health care sectors:

- Announced hospital funding levels are inadequate to meet population growth, aging and inflation. Seventy-five (75) hospitals face deficits in 2008-09, with a forecast increase to 104 hospitals facing deficits in 2009-10. There will be significant cuts and hospital restructuring if these issues are not addressed. The media briefing note contains a list of deficits publicly-disclosed to date. The coalition is calling for a global funding increase to meet community needs.
- In long term care homes, the government has been the target of aggressive campaigns for increased funding by the companies that own and operate the facilities. Unlike previous funding increases which have been given without strings attached to improve hands-on care levels for residents, this year, the government must attach a regulation to any funding increases requiring facilities to provide a minimum average standard of 3.5 hours of direct care to residents per day. The regulated care standard was a key election promise by Premier Dalton McGuinty.
- Dramatic cost increases in the privatized P3 hospitals warrant caution. The government has now announced more than 30 privatized P3 hospitals. In all the P3 hospitals to date, cost overruns have amounted to at least \$1 billion in capital costs alone, and high private financing costs are shifting money away from care budgets to bricks and mortar - and profit-taking. The Provincial Auditor General is conducting an audit on the Brampton Civic Hospital P3. The coalition is calling for a moratorium P3s pending the findings of that audit.
- After a mass protest of more than 1,500 people in Hamilton after the non-profit Victorian Order of Nurses and St. Josephs were cut from the bidding process in January, the government placed a second moratorium on competitive bidding - the practice of tendering out homecare to for-profit and non-profit companies to compete for contracts every three years. The system has resulted in high administrative costs, unpopular dislocation for patients and reduced continuity of care, and severe staffing shortages. The government will be announcing its next steps in homecare in the next few weeks. The Health Coalition is calling for open province-wide hearings on this issue, including the potential to create a public non-profit homecare system in Ontario as exists elsewhere across Canada.

Briefing note and map available on the coalition website at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca

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