

MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT PLAN TO REDUCE WAIT TIMES AT ONTARIO EMERGENCY ROOMS

January 30, 2006

In 2005, the Hospital Emergency Department and Ambulance Effectiveness Working Group, headed by Dr. Brian Schwartz of Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre's Base Hospital, was established to offer advice on enhanced access and quality of service within the emergency department. The report recommends ways for hospitals and ambulances to transfer patients more efficiently from ambulance paramedics to the hospital emergency department. The government's response to the report includes:

Urgent Care Centers Demonstration Project

The North York General Hospital and Sunnybrook and Women's College Hospital are each being funded for a two-year demonstration project. The hospitals will be receiving a total of \$4.3 million over two years as well as \$875,000 in one time costs to add nurses, physicians and other staff, as well as equipment for telemedicine. Selected patients with minor conditions will be transported to the Urgent Care Centers at the Branson site of North York General Hospital or the Women's College site of Sunnybrook and Women's College Hospital, instead of being sent to an Emergency Department. The Toronto Emergency Medical Service will work closely with the hospitals to determine which patients will be sent to the Urgent Care Centers. The Urgent Care Centers will be launched this spring, and after two years of operation, will be evaluated to determine whether they are reducing the time ambulances spend waiting with patients in Emergency Departments and improving the quality of the patient experience in the Emergency Department. If the evaluation is positive, a decision will be made about expanding the arrangement to other communities.

Surge Capacity Protocol Demonstration Project

St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto is being funded a total of \$698,800 for a two-year demonstration project that will implement various solutions to improve how patients move through the emergency department, particularly during busy or high volume times. Over a two-year period, the hospital will introduce a hospital-wide team dedicated to improving patient flow, set up patient pre-admission and pre-discharge lounges and implement an electronic bed management system. The project will start this spring. In two years, it will be evaluated to determine whether these solutions are effective in improving patient flow and quality of service, and whether they would be of value to other hospitals.

ED and Ambulance Quality Implementation Team

Ken Deane, President and CEO St. Joseph's Health Center in Toronto has been appointed Chair of the Emergency Department and Ambulance Quality Implementation Team, being set up to assist the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care with implementation of the Hospital Emergency Department And Ambulance Effectiveness Working Group Report recommendations. Having served in CEO and senior executive positions in a number of hospitals throughout Ontario, and led significant transformations, Deane is well positioned to direct the implementation of the working group recommendations. The committee will have its inaugural meeting in March 2006.

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