

For Immediate Release

May 5, 2006

2006/nr-031

BETTER ACCESS TO BETTER CARE FOR TORONTO RESIDENTS

McGuinty Government Supporting Construction & Renovation at St. Joseph's Health Centre

TORONTO – The McGuinty government today announced that it is improving health care services for the people of Toronto by approving construction and renovation projects at the St. Joseph's Health Centre, Gerard Kennedy, MPP announced today on behalf of Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman.

“Our government is ensuring that people in all areas of the province have access to the health care they need, and that includes the highest quality local hospitals,” said Kennedy. “I’m pleased to announce that Toronto soon will have even better hospital facilities to serve the needs of area residents.”

St. Joseph's Health Centre's capital project is being cost-shared between the government and the hospital. It is one of several hospital projects approved under ReNew Ontario, the government's five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan, of which \$5 billion is earmarked for health care infrastructure.

“This commitment will allow the hospital to move ahead with the construction of the final phase of its redevelopment project,” said Kennedy. “Also renovations will be completed to provide enhanced facilities for the provision of eye care.”

This means that patients will have access to a state-of-the-art hospital with modern maternal and newborn services, two surgical in-patient units, capacity for a six-bed child and adolescent mental health unit and a new 28-bed medical unit.

Final construction of the rest of St. Joseph's Health Centre's project would then begin in 2008 and be completed in 2010. The government is working with the hospital to advance early works for construction of a new underground-parking garage ahead of the rest of the project.

ReNew Ontario is a comprehensive plan to modernize and replace many of the province's hospitals, schools and post-secondary institutions. It will support the provincial economy through investments in transportation, transit and research and by accommodating growth.

“This announcement meets an urgent need in our community for improved access and for facilities that support the provision of quality patient care. As a progressive and innovative hospital we are committed to creating the conditions for our medical and hospital staff to provide quality care and a superior patient care experience with respect, dignity, and compassion,” said Ken Deane, President and Chief Executive Officer of St. Joseph's Health Centre. “I am delighted with the level of government support in modernizing our facilities as we continue to serve the west end of Toronto and foster a healthy community for all.”

“The ReNew Ontario plan will make it possible for many hospitals to undertake much needed capital improvements to facilities that, across Ontario, average 43 years old,” said Hilary Short, President and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA). “We welcome today’s important investment in the St. Joseph’s Health Centre, and we look forward to further investments like these in the months and years ahead.”

“This hospital capital project is part of our government’s plan to help ensure Ontarians have the high quality services they need and deserve,” said David Caplan, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. “For the first time, this province has a long-term plan for building and developing our hospitals that will bring much needed stability and certainty to hospitals and better health care for Ontarians.”

“Our government has a vision of a health care system that will help keep Ontarians healthier, get them good care when they are sick, and that will be there for their children and grandchildren,” said Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman. “Upgrading and modernizing our hospitals is critical to making that vision a reality.”

Today’s initiative is part of the McGuinty government’s plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Valerie Cooper-Wells
Community Outreach Assistant
416-763-5630