

April 27, 2006

ONTARIO'S FORENSIC MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

Ontario's forensic mental health system is part of the broader mental health system in the province. However, the authority to detain or supervise forensic patients comes from the Criminal Code of Canada. A forensic patient is defined as a person who suffers from a major mental disorder, is in conflict with the law, and is being dealt with by the courts or the Ontario Review Board, an independent body that has jurisdiction over accused persons who have been found unfit or not criminally responsible and makes decisions about their custody and/or release.

When a person commits a criminal offence and appears before a court or exhibiting behavior that suggests a mental illness, the court can order an assessment of the accused person's mental condition to determine whether the accused is fit to stand trial or is not criminally responsible. The court can also order treatment of forensic clients for up to 60 days for the purpose of making an unfit accused person fit to stand trial.

The ORB could decide that the accused should be sent to a forensic hospital facility, released back into the community for treatment there, or given an absolute discharge.

Ontario now has 609 forensic hospital beds and will have 684 when the new beds announced today are in operation beginning this fall. The beds are in hospitals located in Toronto, Ottawa, Brockville, Kingston, Whitby, Hamilton, St. Thomas, Penetanguishene, North Bay and Thunder Bay.

The forensic hospital beds provide two kinds of services: assessment and rehabilitation. Assessment beds are for accused persons being assessed for their fitness to stand trial, as ordered by the court or the ORB. Rehabilitation beds are for accused persons who have been found unfit to stand trial or not criminally responsible, and who have been ordered by the ORB to receive long-term mental health care.

Members of the media:
David Spencer
Minister's Office
416-327-4320

John Letherby
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 416-327-4327, or 1-800-268-1154

This backgrounder, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca> under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca.

Version française disponible.