

Ontario Budget Will Not Help Save Hospitals From Closure, Cuts, Mass Layoffs

In hard economic times, McGuinty's failure to sustain local hospitals is out of line with the values and priorities of Ontarians; Ontario Health Coalition

Toronto – Today's budget will make much of total health spending figures in an attempt to cover up for inadequate funding of hospitals' global budgets. The serious underfunding of hospitals has created a crisis of threatened emergency department closures, mass lay offs and downsizing, cuts to needed hospital services and even entire hospital closures.

“This budget does not provide even what is needed to maintain existing services, or save our local hospitals from major cuts,” noted Dora Jeffries, coalition co chair. “In hard economic times hospital closures, cuts to services and lay offs are the worst possible option. In many communities, the local hospital is vital to economic development. McGuinty is risking important hospital capacity for the long term by underfunding the hospital system.”

“In this budget, McGuinty is out of line with the priorities and values of Ontarians,” said Natalie Mehra, coalition director. “Ontarians would expect that all administrative costs and consultants be cut first, before our ERs, small town hospitals and hospital programs. In dozens of communities, Ontarians are waiting for McGuinty to provide a substantive answer to their pleas to provide adequate funding to save local hospital services. This budget fails to deliver.”

“The consequences of the major hospital cuts include worse overcrowding, overburdened Emergency Departments, longer wait times, worse staffing shortages and lost capacity. We are calling on communities to tell McGuinty and our local MPPs that we need adequate funding to protect our hospital services,” concluded Ms. Jeffries.

Quick Facts:

- The budget contains very little information and almost no detail on health care spending.
- Increases for hospital global budgets are going down to 2.1%, as predicted, below the rate of inflation faced by hospitals. This means that, as warned, 70+% of Ontario's hospitals will be pushed into deficit this fiscal year. Communities waiting to hear if the McGuinty government will stop their hospital or ER closures (Wallaceburg, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, St. Joseph's Island, Durham area) have not received any answers in this budget.
- Ontario's hospitals are funded \$1.6 billion less than other provinces. Hospital funding has been shrinking as a percentage of health care spending for 20 years.
- The budget provides no figures for long term care facilities, and no commitment to provide even previously announced improvements to staffing and care levels.
- Homecare increases are negligible.
- In the budget documents, the government is continuing to pretend its privatized P3 hospital program is moving ahead, even though frozen capital markets have delayed or derailed projects everywhere, including in St. Catharines.

