

HEALTH MINISTER'S UPDATE

Health Care Update from Dr. Eric Hoskins Spring/ Summer 2017

Dear friends,

The past few months have been busy ones and there is a lot of progress to share!

In May, our government released the 2017 Budget: A Stronger, Healthier Ontario, and I am particularly proud of all the exciting new investments we have made in the healthcare sector. Among all of these bold new investments, OHIP+ stands out. Starting January 1st, universal drug coverage will be available free-of-charge to all Ontarians aged 24 and under, and it will fully cover the cost of medicines funded through the Ontario Drug Benefit program, a list of over 4,000 medications. This program is the first of its kind in Canada and I am pleased that Ontario is at the forefront.

Additionally, we have increased hospital funding again this year by three per cent in order to support vital services, keep wait times low and maintain access to elective surgeries. By doing so, we are reaffirming our commitment to putting patients first, and protecting health care today and into the future.

As usual, the spring legislative session was a busy one as our government worked to pass several pieces of important legislation, including the [Protecting Patients Act](#) and [Ontario's Medical Assistance in Dying Statute Law Amendment Act](#).

As always, if you require information, want to share your ideas, or voice any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office. Thank you for continuing to work with me and my office to improve Ontario's health care system in a bold and meaningful way.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eric Hoskins
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

[Providing Faster Access to Mental Health Services](#)



Minister Hoskins at Routes, Social Resource Centre in Toronto.

Earlier this year, Minister Hoskins announced Canada's first government-funded structured psychotherapy program. More access to therapy means thousands of people living with conditions like anxiety and depression can learn strategies to improve their mental health and be more successful in their daily lives. Up to 1,150 new supportive housing units will also become available for people living with mental illness and/or substance use disorder. Additionally, up to nine youth wellness hubs will become available where youth can receive walk-in, one-stop, access to mental health and addiction services. Overall, the province is working to transform the mental health and addictions system into one that is equitable and easily accessible.

[Working to Prevent Opioid Addiction & Overdose](#)



Minister Hoskins in Toronto on April 11, 2017.

In confronting Ontario's opioid crisis, Minister Hoskins announced the government's commitment to provide free access to naloxone for anyone at risk of an overdose, as well as their family and friends. Naloxone is a life-saving drug that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose and is available in over 1,500 pharmacies in Ontario. Click [here](#) to find a naloxone dispensing pharmacy, public health unit or community based organization near you.

[Discussing Ontario's Latest Actions Against the Opioid Crisis](#)



Left to Right: Advanced Care Paramedic John McPhee, Advanced Care Paramedic Sébastien Dube and Minister Hoskins in Toronto on May 24, 2017.

Ontario's opioid crisis is a problem that we are continuing to work diligently to combat. As part of our commitment to openness and transparency, Ontario launched an [Interactive Opioid Tracker](#). The tracker is a web-based tool that makes available a wide range of data on opioid-related morbidity and mortality. Ontario's opioid strategy is the most comprehensive in the country and the Interactive Opioid Tracker will help us to better understand opioid use disorder and will strengthen our strategy as we work to tackle this crisis in a targeted and informed way.

[Stepping Up Ontario's Fight Against Opioids](#)



Mayor John Tory and Minister Hoskins speak about preventing opioid overdose on June 12, 2017 in Toronto.

Ontario is stepping up its fight against the opioid crisis with new front line addiction and mental health workers for every community in the province. In addition to Ontario's commitment in April 2017, an additional 80,000 naloxone kits per year will be distributed to front-line organizations. The additional naloxone kits will be distributed in the community to those at risk of opioid overdose and to their friends and family through various organizations. Additionally, Ontario is providing funding for every public health unit in the province to hire more front-line workers to help expand supports for people impacted by opioid addiction and overdose.

[Enhancing Support Services to Tackle Opioid Crisis](#)



Minister Hoskins provides an update to Ontario's Opioid Action Plan. Accompanying him at the podium; clinicians, harm reduction workers, people with lived experience and Community Health Centre outreach workers.

Minister Hoskins, accompanied by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. David Williams, visited St. Michael's Hospital to announce new investments to tackle Ontario's opioid crisis. These investments of more than \$222 million over three years will provide urgent relief to those affected by the opioid crisis, including adding more front-line harm-reduction workers, expanding the supply of naloxone, and creating new rapid access addiction clinics in every region of the province. Additional initiatives include partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Ontario College of Family Physicians and Indigenous communities to expand treatment options, care facilities and appropriate prescribing practices.

[Providing a Helping Hand to Ontario's Caregivers](#)



Minister Hoskins has tea with Helen Sanderson and other users of SPRINT respite services on April 25, 2017.

In strengthening models of quality care, Minister Hoskins visited SPRINT Senior Care where he announced the province's commitment to increase respite services for caregivers. This commitment will provide increased education and training opportunities for caregivers, allow people who care for their loved ones to take breaks from their unpaid duties, and provide a streamlined tax credit to Ontario caregivers.

[Supporting the Construction of New Hospital Projects Across the Province](#)



In May, Premier Wynne, Minister Hoskins, and the Honourable Charles Sousa, Minister of Finance, announced increased hospital infrastructure funding at Trillium Health Partners in Mississauga.

As part of the 2017 Budget, Ontario invested an additional \$9 billion to support the construction of new hospital projects across the province. Essential expansions will include emergency rooms, surgical facilities and patient spaces. This new investment will help to build hospital projects in communities like Mississauga, Windsor, Hamilton and James Bay; ensuring Ontarians receive the right care, where and when they need it.

[Supporting Mental Health on Campus](#)



Left to Right: Stuart Norton, Carina Zhang, Chumwemwe Alao, Anne Boucher, and Minister Hoskins at University of Toronto.

In May, Minister Hoskins and Minister Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development announced a \$6 million in additional funding, to support mental health services and supports at Ontario's colleges and universities. This will provide young people with walk-in, one-stop access to mental health and addictions services, as well as other health, social and employment supports under one roof.

[Expanding Dementia Care Provincewide](#)



Minister Hoskins and Elaine Lambert, wife and primary caregiver of a Baycrest client, at Baycrest Health Sciences in Toronto on May 4, 2017.

In improving care for seniors, Minister Hoskins announced that Ontario is improving access to high-quality care for people living with dementia and those who care for them. There are numerous new supports that are part of Ontario's new strategy, including enhancing caregiver respite services, increasing access to adult day programs for those living with dementia, and raising awareness and reducing stigma surrounding dementia. The province will ensure that everyone living with dementia in Ontario, as well as their care partners, will have the right supports in place to make informed decisions about their care and that they continue to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Improving the Patient Experience



Left to Right: Minister Hoskins, MPP Han Dong, Dr. Ronald Cohn, Pediatrician-in-Chief at Sick Kids, and Kyla Austin, mother of a Sick Kids Patient.

In May, Ontario committed to invest over \$500 million in public hospitals to improve access and reduce wait times for chemotherapy, stroke treatments, and hip and knee replacements. This 'booster shot' of funding will benefit hospitals across Ontario and allow us to continue to provide the highest level of health care to all Ontarians.

[Bringing Care Closer to Home for Northern Ontario Patients](#)



Left to Right: David Stephens, First EVAR patient at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Minister Bill Mauro, Jean Bartkowiak, President and CEO of Thunder Bay Health Sciences Centre, Minister Eric Hoskins, Dr. Mark Henderson, Executive Vice President of Patient Services, Thunder Bay Health Sciences Centre.

Earlier this year, Minister Hoskins was at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre to announce that the hospital would receive an additional \$4 million to provide more local services, including: more MRI hours, more cataract surgeries, and additional hip and knee replacement surgeries. Additionally, Minister Hoskins announced a \$10-million expansion of the Northern Health Travel Grant Program, which helps people in northern Ontario cover their travel costs for services or procedures that are not available in their local communities.

[Increasing Access to Compassionate End-Of Life and Palliative Care](#)



Minister Hoskins at Community Care Northumberland in Cobourg on May 25, 2017.

In continuing our government's commitment to end-of-life care, Minister Hoskins announced Ontario's commitment to improve access to high-quality end-of-life and palliative care in Northumberland County with the announcement operational funding for of a new hospice with three beds. This hospice will support up to 35 clients and their families each year. Expected to open its doors to the public in March 2019, the new facility will ensure that high-quality and compassionate end-of-life and palliative care is available to meet the growing need for residential hospice care in the region.

[Enhancing Access to Care for People in Kingston Area](#)



Minister Hoskins, Dr. David Pichora and MPP Sophie Kiwala at Providence Care Hospital in Kingston on May 25, 2017.

Providence Care Hospital is now providing faster access to care, closer to home, for people in the Kingston area. In May, Minister Hoskins joined the staff of Providence Care Hospital to celebrate the opening of the new facility. Providence Care Hospital is one of the first in North America to fully integrate long-term specialized mental health care with physical rehabilitation, complex care and palliative care in one building. All patients, no matter their diagnosis, will now have access to the same therapy spaces, recovery spaces and private inpatient rooms.

Other Highlights Include:

- On April 4, 2017, Minister Hoskins participated in the Ontario Psychological Association reception.
 - On April 20, 2017, Minister Hoskins sat in on the Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN) Renewal Advisory Meeting.
 - On April 27, 2017, Minister Hoskins delivered remarks at the 92nd Registered Nurses Association Organization Annual General Meeting.
 - On May 10, 2017, Parliamentary Assistant John Fraser announced Ontario's new investments in [Interprofessional Primary Care Teams](#).
-

For any questions please contact Brandy Fronimadis at:
416-325-8498 / Brandy.Fronimadis@Ontario.ca



Copyright © 2016 Minister of Health, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

Ontario Ministry of Health
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1E9
Canada
