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McGUINTY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP OF NORTH WEST LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORK

LHINs Will Allow Greater Community Involvement In Local Health Care Decisions

THUNDER BAY – The McGuinty government today named the three founding board members of the North West Local Health Integration Network who will lead the start up of the network in their community. Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) will be responsible for planning, integrating and funding local health services to make it easier for patients to access the care they need.

“We are creating LHINs because local health services are best planned at the local level, by people familiar with the needs of a community,” said Michael Gravelle, the MPP for Thunder Bay-Superior North. “You can’t micromanage a \$33 billion health care system from an office in Toronto. We need local expertise from right across Ontario to help plan and co-ordinate the health care services that are right for people in different communities.”

Gravelle and Bill Mauro, the MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, also announced that Thunder Bay will be the location of the headquarters for the North West Local Health Integration Network. The LHIN, which includes the districts of Thunder Bay, Rainy River and most of Kenora, is expected to open later this summer.

The North West LHIN is one of 14 being created in Ontario. LHINs are local entities designed to plan, integrate and fund local health services – including hospitals, community care access centres, home care, long-term care, mental health, community health centres, as well as addiction and community support services – within a specific geographic area.

Gravelle and Mauro jointly announced that John Whitfield of Thunder Bay will be the LHIN board chair, with Janice Beazley of Fort Frances and Ennis Fiddler of Sandy Lake serving as founding board members. The government proposes that each LHIN board would have a full complement of nine members by the end of the year.

“Leadership is the key to making any significant system change work,” Mauro said. “The founding board members for our LHINs have impressive records of service in their communities. They bring diverse leadership experience in the private and public sectors to the task of improving the way we manage our health care system.”

In his first official duty as chair, Whitfield announced that Gwen DuBois-Wing been selected as the CEO.

“Gwen is an outstanding leader with significant experience in the health care field,” Whitfield said. “Her experience will be vital as we establish the North West Local Health Integration Network.”

“I am pleased to have been chosen as the first CEO of the North West Local Health Integration Network,” DuBois-Wing said. “I have 15 years of experience in senior health management here in the North and I am looking forward to the challenge of bringing some of that experience to the launching of this new local health organization.”

The roles of LHINs will be phased in over time. Subject to the passage of legislation, they would begin by working with the local community and health care providers to set priorities, and plan health services in their area. They would then move to integrating and co-ordinating local health services, and eventually, to determining and providing funding and resources.

“LHINs will make it easier for patients to access all of the different health services they need in their own communities, because these services will be co-ordinated in those communities,” said Gravelle.

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government’s plan to build a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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