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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCE CONSTRUCTION OF 38 NEW BEDS AT ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Construction of new wing for people with mental illness to begin in 2007/08

THUNDER BAY - The McGuinty government today announced that it is improving health care services for residents of the Thunder Bay area by giving approval to proceed with an important capital project at St. Joseph's Care Group, Michael Gravelle, MPP Thunder Bay-Superior North and Bill Mauro, MPP Thunder Bay-Atikokan, announced today on behalf of Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman.

"This project will involve the construction of a new wing on the St. Joseph's Hospital site that will allow for the construction of 38 beds for people with mental illness, said Gravelle. "This means that people with mental illness will have access to longer-term mental health beds, in state of the art facilities on the St. Joseph's Hospital site."

"This project is an important step forward in caring for people with mental illness in Northwestern Ontario," said Mauro. "These improved facilities will mean that Thunder Bay and surrounding area will soon have even better hospital facilities to serve the needs of area residents."

"Construction of St. Joseph's Care Group's mental health project is slated to begin in 2007-2008," said Gravelle. "This is one of several hospital projects approved under ReNew Ontario, the government's five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan."

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

"This is wonderful news for our organization and the people we serve. This is an important step in moving health care reform forward," said Carl White, President, St. Joseph's Care Group.

"Investments in modern hospital infrastructure are investments in modern patient care services," said Hilary Short, President and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association. "We welcome today's important investment for St. Joseph's Care Group, 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 Mauro. "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."

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