

Ontario Adding 129 Hospital Beds Across Northern Ontario

Investment Will Increase Hospital Capacity, Reduce Surgical Backlogs and Improve Access to Care

NEWS

November 9, 2020

KENORA — The Ontario government is providing \$13 million to create up to 129 more beds at 6 health sciences facilities across Northern Ontario. This investment will help reduce surgical backlogs and improve access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This investment includes:

- 28 beds at Kirkland Lake District Hospital
- 12 beds at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora
- 15 beds at Sensenbrenner Hospital in Kapuskasing
- 25 beds in Weeneebayko Area Health Authority in Moose Factory
- 28 beds and 1 additional critical care bed at Health Sciences North in Sudbury
- 30 hospital beds at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

“Our government continues to invest in urgent health care priorities in communities across the north,” said Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, Minister of Indigenous Affairs and MPP for Kenora–Rainy River. “We are delivering on our promise to make a difference in Northern communities by providing improved patient care capacity and hospital beds where they are needed most.”

The new beds announced today are in addition to the \$234.5 million investment for 139 critical care beds and up to 1,349 hospital beds included in Ontario’s fall preparedness plan, [Keeping Ontarians Safe: Preparing for Future Waves of COVID-19](#). This brings the total investment to \$351 million for more than 2,250 new beds at 57 hospitals and alternate health facilities across the province - beds that will add more capacity for hospitals, help with occupancy pressures and support the continuation of surgeries and procedures.

“Our government is making the necessary investments to quickly and effectively increase hospital capacity and reduce wait times for patients and families across Northern Ontario,” said Minister Elliott. “This additional investment will ensure our health care system is able to respond to future waves of COVID-19 and help patients waiting for surgeries and other procedures get the care they need, faster.”

Last week the government released the 2020 Budget, [Ontario Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover](#). Ontario's COVID-19 health response is now a projected \$15.2 billion. The government is making available \$4 billion in 2021-22 and a further \$2 billion in 2022-23 to ensure the Province can remain responsive to evolving needs in the fight against the pandemic.

The 2020-21 spending includes \$2.8 billion to support the Province's Fall Preparedness Plan for Health, Long-Term Care and Education — the most comprehensive and robust plan in the country to respond to the second wave of COVID-19. The fall plan focuses on addressing surges in COVID-19 cases and reducing health service backlogs by:

- Extending hours for additional priority surgeries and diagnostic imaging;
- Helping up to 850 alternate level of care patients access proper care in a home or community setting to help free up hospital capacity;
- Expanding digital health and virtual services, which provide alternatives to in-person care that limit the transmission of COVID-19, while maintaining access to care;
- Improving access to mental health and addictions services and supports; and
- Increasing home and community care service by adding 484,000 nursing and therapy visits and 1.4 million personal support worker hours.

With a recent increase in cases of COVID-19, it remains vital for the government to continue to protect vulnerable populations and for each Ontarian to follow public health advice.

QUOTES

Blanche River Health – Kirkland Lake

“This funding will support our efforts to address increasing occupancy associated with patients awaiting placement in long term care facilities, and a potential surge in COVID-19 cases within our district.” – Sean Conroy, President and CEO

Lake of the Woods District Hospital – Kenora

“We are very pleased to receive funding approval for up to 12 beds in the event we face a surge of COVID-19 admissions that surpasses our normal bed capacity. This support enables us to fully execute our pandemic response. We appreciate the support from the Government of Ontario and Minister Rickford.” – Ray Racette, President and CEO

Sensenbrenner Hospital – Kapuskasing

“This is definitely amazing news for our region! We are very excited to be able to accommodate more patients who require Hospital Care or Alternate Level of Care (ALC) at Sensenbrenner Hospital. These fifteen extra beds will also help to alleviate the pressures of overcapacity that have had a drastic impact on our institution for a number of years. We look forward to working with the Ministry and our partners on this initiative!” – France Dallaire, Chief Executive Officer

Weeneebayko Area Health Authority – Moose Factory

“The announcement of 25 beds for Weeneebayko Area Health Authority will assist in improving access to care as close to home as possible, along with reducing surgical back log, and will alleviate additional pressures on our health care system and

increase our hospital capacity to ensure we are meeting the needs of our people in the James & Hudson Bay Region.” – Lynne Innes, President and CEO

Health Sciences North – Sudbury

“Today’s funding is much welcomed news. As part of HSN’s plans to increase bed capacity during COVID-19, 89 beds have been opened since the spring. This includes 29 beds at the Ramsey Lake Health Centre, and 60 beds at the Clarion Hotel operated by St. Joseph’s Continuing Care Centre. HSN is also planning to open more beds this winter for flu season and as we ramp up surgical activity above historical levels.” – Dominic Giroux, President and CEO

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

“The flu increases the need for patient beds at our Hospital. That, combined with the threat of COVID-19, makes the additional 30 beds a very welcome investment by the province because it allows us to prepare for a worst-case scenario. Our collective priority is to provide safe, quality care, close to home.” – Dr. Stewart Kennedy, COVID-19 Incident Manager

QUICK FACTS

- Ontario previously invested \$741 million to help clear the backlog of surgeries and build more capacity in the health care system to effectively manage surges and outbreaks in COVID-19 cases.
- The Ontario government also released A Measured Approach to Planning for Surgeries and Procedures During the COVID-19 Pandemic, a comprehensive framework to help hospitals assess their readiness and begin planning for the gradual resumption of scheduled surgeries and procedures, while maintaining their ability to respond to COVID-19 and the flu season.
- For additional protection, the Ontario government is encouraging everyone to download the new COVID Alert app on their smart phone from the Apple and Google Play app stores.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Visit Ontario’s website to learn more about how the province continues to protect the people of Ontario from COVID-19.
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