

For Immediate Release**October 3, 2018****PC cuts to hospital surge beds follows cuts to mental health and addictions:*****PC health policy becomes clear despite attempt to dress bed cuts as new beds***

TORONTO, ON –As Ontario’s already overcrowded hospitals hit the fall flu season, a PC government announcement that slashes surge beds and funding by more than half, is “deceptive, misleading and very concerning”, says Michael Hurley president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions.

Last winter the predecessor Liberals announced that \$187 million for 2018-2019 about 1200 beds and other spaces do deal with patient surges during the flu season. Today Premier Ford’s government cut that funding to \$90 million and just 640 beds and spaces.

“To trumpet this as step to ending to hallway medicine is completely cynical. In fact, the number of patients’ suffering in hospital hallways will increase as bed capacity falls with these cutbacks. The majority of our hospitals are operating at over 100 per cent capacity, even before the flu season hits. Hospitals need additional permanent beds and they need more surge capacity,” says Hurley.

Ontario has the fewest hospital beds to population and the fewest staff of any province in Canada or country with a developed economy. Hospitals have created makeshift beds in tub rooms, solariums and hallways to deal with the lack of available beds. Many patients wind up treated for days on uncomfortable stretchers outside emergency rooms, in conditions without privacy or dignity. CUPE estimates that 8,400 permanent beds need to be added so that patients get the care they require.

In last summer’s provincial election, Mr. Ford campaigned to end hallway medicine. “Far from doing that, these cuts will make the bed shortage much worse. More patients, many of them seniors with complex conditions who require hospitalization will be pushed out of hospital or not admitted at all because of the lack of hospital capacity,” says Hurley.

The cuts to mental health and addictions this summer and now “these cuts to seasonal beds confirm our worst fears about the Conservative health policy - that it is completely unrelated to demand and in thrall to a fiscal plan to slash spending and cut corporate taxes,” says Hurley.

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