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Preparation Work Starts at site of NHS's New Health-Care Complex

Niagara, ON - Construction of the Niagara Health System's (NHS) new health-care complex is one step closer with the start of work to prepare the west St. Catharines site earlier this month.

"This marks an important milestone for the Niagara region," said Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal David Caplan. "This new hospital is part of the government's five-year \$30- billion plus infrastructure investment representing the biggest investment in health care infrastructure in more than a generation."

"This is a clear sign of our government's commitment to upgrade and modernize health care," said George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "Once built, this new hospital will mean Niagara-area residents will have better access to important emergency services."

Work on the site includes:

- Planting of shrubs and trees around the perimeter of the Francis Creek Drainage Canal to separate the hospital from the railroad tracks, giving the trees a few years to mature and develop in anticipation of the building;
- Creation of an enhanced fish habitat and spawning ground in the Francis Creek Drainage Canal;
- Promotional fencing for the It's Our Time fundraising campaign to be located at the corner of Fourth Avenue and First Street;
- Additional preparatory work will include development of tender documents for the First Street road improvements.

This preparation work will satisfy the requirements of the City of St. Catharines and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority in advance of the development of the site.

"This hospital will provide a tremendous opportunity to improve health care in the Niagara region," said Jim Bradley, MPP for St. Catharines. "Our government is pleased to be bringing better healthcare to our community."

"The Niagara Region deserves the very best health-care facilities we can offer. It's exciting to be moving forward with the site preparation work for this new hospital that will include the Walker Family Cancer Centre that will provide cancer care services that are so desperately needed in this area," said Kim Craitor, MPP for Niagara Falls. "I know from first hand experience that taking this important step will make life easier for the people of Niagara so they don't have to travel to Toronto and Hamilton for necessary medical treatment."

"We were pleased to award the contract for this work to Merit Contractors Niagara, the successful bidder, and are eager to get this work completed before construction begins," says NHS Chief Planning and Development Officer Gloria Kain.

"Beginning preparation work on the site of the new health-care complex signals that we are yet another step closer to beginning construction," said NHS President and CEO Debbie Sevenpifer. "We are grateful for the commitment shown to the new hospital by all of our civic partners throughout the region. We will continue to work collaboratively with all of our partners on this exciting project in order to build a better health-care system and a better Niagara."

Once completed, the facility will house new regional services, including cardiac catheterization, radiation treatment for cancer patients and 53 new longer-term mental health beds. The addition of these regional services will ensure closer-to-home access to advanced-level care for the more than 434,000 residents across the Niagara region.

The health-care complex will also house a 375-bed community hospital to serve St. Catharines, Thorold, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities with a full range of acute/critical care, surgical, emergency, longer-term mental health and ambulatory services. The new 850,000 square-foot health-care complex will be built on a 32-acre section of the 40-acre site in St. Catharines and replace two aging, existing community hospitals.

"To say that we are eagerly awaiting the substantial completion of the hospital in 2011 is an understatement," said NHS Board of Trustees Chair Betty Lou Souter. "When the project is completed, Niagara will be home to one of the most up-to-date hospitals in the province, and we will finally have the infrastructure to care for and treat the unique health needs of the Niagara region and bring care closer to home for patients across the region."

Groundbreaking for construction of the new health-care complex is scheduled to occur in fall 2008.

Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will work with the Niagara Health System to build the new hospital, which will remain publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable. Infrastructure Ontario is a Crown corporation dedicated to managing some of the province's larger and more complex infrastructure renewal projects—ensuring they are built on time and on budget.

This project is guided by principles outlined in the Province's Building a Better Tomorrow framework, which ensures public ownership of core assets such as hospitals, schools, and water and wastewater facilities.

Visit www.infrastructureontario.ca for more information.

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BACKGROUNDER

Niagara Health System

The Niagara Health System (NHS) consists of six hospital sites and an ambulatory care centre serving 434,000 residents across the 12 municipalities making up the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

The Niagara Health System Project

The Niagara Health System project will result in a new, state-of-the-art health-care complex that will bring new regional programs and services to Niagara and replace two aging, existing community hospitals in St. Catharines.

The new health-care complex to be built at First Street and Fourth Avenue in St. Catharines will include:

- A new Niagara Regional Cancer Centre - now known as the Walker Family Cancer Centre - which will provide close-to-home treatment for the more than 1,000 cancer patients who currently travel to Hamilton or Toronto for life-saving radiation treatment;
- A new Regional Longer-Term Mental Health Centre with 53 longer-term inpatient mental health beds, as well as 30 acute mental health beds and ambulatory care services for Niagara residents;
- A new Regional Cardiac Catheterization Centre to provide diagnostic investigation services allowing procedures to be undertaken to reduce hospitalizations due to heart disease by lowering wait times and improving access to treatment;
- Expanded regional dialysis services; enabling the hospital to act as the hub of regional chronic kidney disease (CKD) services; accompanied by permanent dialysis units in Welland and Niagara Falls;
- A 375-bed community-based hospital offering:
 - Acute and critical inpatient services, surgical, emergency and ambulatory services available under one roof for the residents of St. Catharines, Thorold, Niagara-on-the-Lake and the area.
- The 850,000 square-foot facility will be built on a 32-acre section of the 40-acre site.