

# Transforming Ontario's Health Care System

## LHIN Coordination Project

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On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, Ontario's health care system will transform itself in a fundamental way. The 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) created by the government last year will come more fully into their power, assuming responsibility for planning, funding and integrating health services in their local areas. This represents a critical step in the evolution of a health care system that is accessible, coordinated and responsive, in addition to being accountable and sustainable.

Health care in Ontario is now a \$35.4 billion operation – an enormous undertaking that no longer lends itself to micromanagement from head office. The creation of LHINs is an acknowledgement that the province's health care environment had simply become too big and complicated, was not responsive enough to local needs and concerns, and was increasingly difficult for ordinary citizens to navigate.

As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, LHINs will oversee nearly two thirds of the health care budget in Ontario – roughly \$21 billion. LHINs will be responsible for the following service providers:

- Public and private hospitals
- Long-Term Care Homes
- Community Health Centres
- Mental health and addictions
- Community support service agencies
- Community Care Access Centres.

The government will retain control of:

- Individual practitioners
- Family Health Teams
- Ambulance services
- Laboratories
- Provincial drug programs
- Provincial programs
- Independent Health Facilities
- Public Health.

Unlike regional models in place in other provinces of Canada, LHINs won't be direct providers of clinical services. Existing provider organizations will continue

to deliver the actual health care services. LHINs will work with local providers to support more efficient, integrated and cost-effective delivery of these services. LHINs will enable the local community to:

- Match resources and capacity to local needs by looking across the system and across program silos
- Align system resources and reward better care
- Build the capacity to plan, evaluate, manage and fund on the basis of comparable performance across the network.

LHINs will make it easier for patients to gain access to the different health services they need because these services will be co-ordinated locally – in their geographic area – with all the advantages that result from local awareness. Better service integration and coordination on a local, geographic basis will mean better, more rational, and equitable resource allocation, based on local population health needs.

Being community-based, the LHINs will decentralize and transfer decision-making, and plan, co-ordinate and channel funding for the delivery of health services. LHINs will be empowered to plan and implement local decisions about health services and perform some functions that have been previously conducted centrally by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

LHINs are non-profit organizations, funded by the government of Ontario through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Each LHIN is run by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who reports directly to his or her board of directors, consisting of a chair and eight board members appointed by the province. Most board meetings are open to the public to ensure accountability and transparency.

Accountability agreements between health care providers and LHINs, as well as between LHINs and government, will ensure the responsible use of precious health care resources, and the sustainability of the health care system for generations to come. LHINs are not anticipated to result in higher costs to the health care system.

It is very important to view LHINs in the context of the broader health care transformation underway in Ontario. Fair and equitable access to health care for every citizen is one of the great social issues of our time. And as important as it is to improve the quality of the health care services that people are receiving, it's also critically important to create a strong system for delivering those services in a manner that meets the needs of all Ontarians.

To that end, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is going to rise to a more strategic level, focusing on the stewardship of the health system and leaving much of the specific implementation to the 14 LHINs.

The ministry will provide the provincial framework, strategies and priorities, as well as setting the standards, targets and measures for Ontario's health care system. This will ensure that all Ontarians have access to a consistent set of health care services when they need them, regardless of which LHIN they reside in.

It is expected that between now and April 1<sup>st</sup>, many service providers will have questions about the new system, and how they will be affected by the changes being made. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's LHIN website, which can be found at [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca), contains a great deal of useful information. Providers and members of the public with questions that aren't answered there are invited to email those questions to [transforminghealth@moh.gov.on.ca](mailto:transforminghealth@moh.gov.on.ca). They will be answered.