



Tuesday, October 24, 2006

Human Services funding in York Region lags behind provincial averages

NEWMARKET – The Strong Communities Coalition today released an audit of provincial health and social services funding showing that services in the GTA/905 receive significantly less funding compared to the rest of Ontario and that the gap in funding for these services is growing.

“This makes clear what we have been saying for some time – that provincial funding for health and social services in the GTA/905, and in particular York Region, is not keeping pace with the huge population growth taking place in the regions,” said Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC) Co-Chair Bill Hogarth, Director of Education, York Region District School Board.

The Strong Communities Coalition, an alliance led by United Ways of York, Durham, Halton and Peel and the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance, also released *Growing Pains: An Urgent Message from the Strong Communities Coalition*, a report based on the findings of a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) audit.

The audit documented the funding gap in health and social services of the GTA/905 compared to the rest of Ontario. The gap refers to the amount the GTA/905 hospitals and social service providers would have received had their services been funded at the same level as the provincial average.

Growing Pains reports that the annual funding gap for provincially-funded social services in the GTA/905 has grown over the last several years to more than \$550 million, while the health care gap is over \$990 million.

The HSPC of York Region has monitored the funding gap in human services funding since 2001. The gap for social services in 2003-2004 was \$173 million. For hospital services, the funding gap has grown from \$338 million in 2002-2003 to almost \$453 million in 2006-2007. The gap in hospital funding is projected to reach \$480 million in 2007-2008. Over the five years from 2002 to 2007, the funding gap for hospital services in York Region, as compared to the rest of the province, is estimated to be almost \$2 billion.

The Strong Communities Coalition also made three recommendations to the Ontario Government:

1. Immediately provide growth funding for health and social services in the GTA/905 regions.
2. Revise the way the Province allocates funding for health and social services across Ontario to distribute on the basis of a population's size, growth and characteristics – that is, fundamentally *population-based*.
3. Develop a health and social services strategy for Ontario's high-growth regions to complement *Places to Grow*, the provincial growth plan, and develop this strategy in consultation with the GTA/905 stakeholders, including members of the Strong Communities Coalition.

The HSPC supports these recommendations and looks forward to timely and productive discussions with the Provincial government to ensure that York Region gets its fair share of funding for human services.

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