

## **Ontario's Small, Rural and Northern Hospitals Continue to Deliver High Quality Health Care In the Face of Significant Challenges**

Ontario's small, rural and northern hospitals are vitally important to their communities, and continue to deliver high quality care in the face of unique funding and access challenges, said Hilary Short, President and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association.

"In rural and northern communities, the hospital is the hub of health care, providing a broad and comprehensive range of services to meet the needs of the area's patients," said Short. "Despite their challenges, these organizations continue to employ a tremendous amount of innovation and resourcefulness in their efforts to deliver care to the patients that rely on their services each and every day."

Located across both northern and southern Ontario, small, rural and northern hospitals are community-governed facilities dedicated to improving and maintaining the health of residents within the local area. These hospitals face a unique set of challenges in delivering health care, including:

- Geographical remoteness and isolation
- Low-density populations – few economies of scale to be gained
- Demographics – aging population and special needs populations
- Lack of physicians (including specialists), nurses and other health care providers
- Reduced access to medical and other professional health care services
- Limited or no alternatives to essential services
- Decreased availability of community-based services and non-acute care resources
- Fiscal challenges where the options to cut/reduce costs are extremely limited, including decreased opportunity to manage patients on an ambulatory basis

"Ontario's citizens, no matter where they reside, have the right to – and pay for – high quality health care services," said Short. "The Ontario Hospital Association is committed to working with small, rural and northern hospitals in concert with the government to help address their unique funding and access issues; identify opportunities for partnership and growth; and recognize their commitment to the health of their communities."