

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2016



Ontario's Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honorable Dr. Eric Hoskins recently announced \$2M in the provincial budget to improve care for trans Ontarians. This announcement followed a November press conference at Sherbourne Health Centre, in which the Minister announced his intention to change access regulations for trans people seeking OHIP-funded gender confirming surgery (GCS), or sex reassignment surgery (SRS).

Sherbourne worked with the Minister's policy advisors to assist with the development of the regulation. When the new regulation is fully in effect it will no longer be required for people seeking OHIP coverage for GCS to go through the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Instead, people will have the additional option to get approval from qualified primary care providers (Family Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Psychologists and some Social Workers). This change will remove an unnecessary and challenging barrier to access.

As part of the Minister's announcement, Sherbourne will be creating a specialized care hub by expanding programs and services throughout the health centre, including:

- Expanding its 24/7 medical respite program with the addition of a 'trans recovery suite' to accommodate under-housed clients recovering from transition-related surgeries;
- Increasing capacity in its family practice to effectively serve trans primary care clients, with additional case management and mental health support; and
- Ramping up its Rainbow Health Ontario program to train health service providers across the province, so that more trans people can get GCS/SRS assessments and referrals from health service providers in their own communities.

Sherbourne's expansion will include recruiting several new staff positions with expertise in trans care. It builds on Sherbourne's commitment and experience, built over fourteen years working with trans people through their LGBTQ care and services for youth and adults.

Although the regulation change is very welcome news for many, Sherbourne asks trans people seeking surgeries, as well as their health service providers to be patient as the system rolls out. The training required for primary care providers is still to be developed and providers may not be ready to provide referrals. In addition, some details regarding the new process are still being clarified with the Ministry. Trans people who have are currently awaiting an assessment at CAMH's Adult Gender Identity Clinic are advised not to remove themselves from the waiting list for the time being.

The Ministry has set up special information pages for the public [<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/srs/>] and health service providers [<https://www.ontario.ca/page/gender-confirming-surgery>]. Sherbourne also has a special web page [sherbourne.on.ca/transhealth].

QUOTES

Hazelle Palmer, Sherbourne Health Centre CEO: "We commend Minister Hoskins for taking steps to bring approvals for GCS into community health settings. Sherbourne has been working with trans clients since we opened fourteen years ago. Right now we serve over 600 trans clients and we welcome the opportunity to provide them with appropriate supports, including approvals for GCS for those who choose that path, close to home with providers they know and trust".

Graeme Imrie, Sherbourne Health Centre Director of Corporate Affairs: "For a long time the health system has been seriously fragmented and frankly, hasn't met the needs of trans folks. This change is a huge step forward that will put Ontario at the forefront of trans health care. It doesn't solve every issue in the system, but when the Minister met with us here at Sherbourne he assured us that this would be the start of the conversation, not the end".

ABOUT SHERBOURNE HEALTH CENTRE

Situated in the heart of Toronto's downtown east, Sherbourne Health Centre has been providing essential primary care and chronic disease management, mental health services, health promotion and education, and outreach and social supports since 2002. Our doors are open to everyone, and we focus on clients such as homeless and under-housed people, the LGBTQ community, and newcomers to Canada. We direct our efforts to improving health for communities who face social, economic and other systemic barriers, whose complex needs are not met by traditional health care.

Sherbourne's unique, award-winning model combines high quality clinical care with responsive, culturally appropriate community programs that bring barrier-free services to people in our communities who need it most.

Our Rainbow Health Ontario (RHO) program has been operating since 2008 and is designed to increase access to health care and improve the health of LGBTQ communities across the province. RHO offers information, consultations, and professional training as well as support for research and public policy initiatives. RHO has already trained over 800 health care providers on trans health throughout the province. It will take a lead role in offering additional training and support to enable providers to take on the new responsibilities flowing from the regulation change. For more information on training go to www.RainbowHealthOntario.ca/trans-health-connection/

As well as government funding, the Centre relies on the generosity of people and corporations in the community, whose support helps to develop and grow their innovative programs and services.

For more information contact:

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