



***For Immediate Release:
Friday, January 30, 2009***

MEDIA RELEASE

Additional Health Care Funding Critical for Regional Growth

Kitchener, ON – Amid a series of necessary economic stimulus measures contained in last Tuesday's Federal Budget is a significant funding increase for Ontario health care. The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce is extremely hopeful this allocation will address, in the immediate term, some urgent local hospital service issues.

Information contained in the Budget indicates that Ontario will receive a significant per capita increase in funding under the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) for 2009/10. This measure ensures equity with other provinces.

Health care and hospital funding is an area of critical importance across Waterloo Region. In November, both Cambridge Memorial Hospital and St. Mary's General Hospital in Kitchener announced service and staffing reductions to address budgetary deficits.

"The Chamber has been a community leader for the past decade on the recruitment of physicians and local health care service delivery," said Joan Fisk, President and CEO of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. "The business community is increasingly recognizing the importance of this portfolio for attracting both employers and employees."

A recent study drafted by PricewaterhouseCoopers indicated that provincial funding for hospital services in high-growth communities such as the GTA/905, Dufferin County, Simcoe County, Wellington County, and Waterloo Region is \$255 per resident less than the rest of Ontario. The Waterloo-Wellington Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) received hospital funding at \$727 per resident in 2008/09, an amount \$273 less than the provincial average.

In a presentation before the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs of the Ontario Legislature last December, the Chamber called on the provincial government to address inequities in health care delivery by immediately reviewing the funding formula and focusing on hospitals serving high growth areas. Allocations for critical services should be more effectively distributed using a Population Needs-Based formula.

"We hope that Finance Minister Dwight Duncan recognizes this regional inequity in hospital funding and subsequently addresses the issue in the 2009 Ontario Budget" said Fisk. "With a growing population, Waterloo Region cannot absorb continuing health care service cuts."

For further information contact:

Joan Fisk, President and CEO
Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce
(519) 576-5000
jfish@greaterkwchamber.com