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Media Release

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For Immediate Release

FORD GOVERNMENT APPROVES CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN TO ACCOMMODATE A SECOND CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION TABLE AT OUELLETTE CAMPUS

WINDSOR, ON. _ Windsor Regional Hospital (WRH) is proceeding this summer with the launch of a long-awaited construction project at its Ouellette Campus. The construction project will renovate the second floor to accommodate a badly needed second cardiac catheterization table and provide life-saving angioplasty procedures for cardiac patients in our region.

The renovation project, led by Lester Construction, will relocate the existing cardiac catheterization lab from its current location in the basement, which has faced periodic flooding, to a new second floor space that will accommodate two cardiac cath lab tables.

“We have waited for many years for this project to come to fruition. We thank the Ford government for seeing the project through so that we can serve more cardiac patients in our region and save on costs required to send patients to Detroit when we can’t accommodate them here. Even though we were in the midst of the pandemic the Ford government said this project was going to get done and they are delivering on the promise,” said WRH Acting President and CEO and Chief Nursing Executive Karen Riddell.

The cath lab project, expected to be complete in approximately 18 months, will nearly eliminate the need to transport patients to Detroit, which currently costs the Ontario health care system hundreds of thousands of dollars every year.

Simply stated, cardiac catheterization saves lives. It involves a small, minimally invasive incision into an artery through the arm, or groin, allowing the threading of a catheter to through the artery to the heart. It allows clinicians to perform a percutaneous coronary intervention

(PCI) such as coronary angioplasty to open up narrowed or blocked segments of a coronary artery for both emergency patients and scheduled procedures. It is also used as a diagnostic tool to identify specific heart vessel issues.

The first cardiac catheterization table became operational in 1997 at the Ouellette Campus, under the administration of Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital at the time. The lab was located in the corner basement of the facility, where it remains today – quite remote from the Emergency Department and Cardiac Care Unit.

Prior to hospital realignment, the former HDGH had been asking for approval for a second table. That lobby effort continued under Windsor Regional Hospital when the organization took responsibility for the program and all Ouellette Campus services in 2013. A year later, in 2014, the then-Minister of Health for Ontario came to Windsor to announce approval of the second table in a major ceremony at Ouellette Campus. Unfortunately, promised government funds for the project never flowed, despite WRH submissions to government to reduce the capital cost and scope of the project during simultaneous early planning for the new state-of-the-art acute care hospital (approval for the new hospital was later given the green light by the Ford government in March 2021).

As David Musyj, longtime WRH President and CEO told reporters in June 2018: “To say we’re now in 2018 and we still haven’t moved ahead is a big disappointment. We need this. We needed this before. We need it now. We’ve been waiting for four years and there’s no reason why this project shouldn’t be moving ahead immediately.”

In the summer of 2021, well into the COVID-19 era and with resources stretched and attention focused on the pandemic, significant flooding in the basement of Ouellette Campus forced a shutdown of the lab as well as damage to the existing cath lab table and related equipment. This incident again highlighted the need for expansion of Cath Lab services and a more appropriate space for cath lab procedures.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford committed to the project in early 2023 with funding to proceed to the tendering process for both the second cath lab table and cath lab renovation project, as well as for a fourth Linear Accelerator (LINAC) to conduct radiation procedures for Windsor Regional cancer centre patients. The LINAC expansion project is now well under way, and with the tendering process now complete for the cath lab renovation, that project can now proceed as well.

The expansion of Cardiac Catheterization Lab capacity with a second table will significantly increase patient safety and accessibility. WRH is currently the only hospital in Ontario with a cardiac catheterization program using just one table, limiting its capacity and forcing some patients to travel 300 kilometers for complex procedures.

On average, WRH sends one patient per month to Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit due to capacity issues resulting from operating with only one table, costing between \$43,000 and \$75,000 USD per procedure, with additional interventions potentially increasing costs by up to \$187,000 USD per patient.

“This is an important milestone for Windsor Regional Hospital. It will save lives and provide the necessary clinical space for our healthcare team,” said Dr. Wassim Saad, WRH Chief of Staff. “We appreciate the government’s commitment to patient care and safety.”

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For media inquiries contact:

Steve Erwin, Director, Public Affairs & Communications
519-564-4902 (cell) / steve.erwin@wrh.on.ca