



## Press Release

For Immediate Release

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### **South East Toronto Health Providers Collectively Receive Award from Minister of Health & Long-Term Care**

**Toronto, Ontario** – *Solutions – East Toronto's Health Collaborative* (Solutions), a network of fifteen health care organizations in South East Toronto, was awarded the first ever *Minister's Award in Innovation* for meeting community needs through integrated care from the Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for Ontario. *Solutions' Community Referrals by EMS (CREMS)* project was selected from 600 submissions to receive the award.

"I want to congratulate the people who came together to form Solutions - East Toronto's Health Collaborative," said Minister Smitherman. "They have won an award for innovation in meeting community needs through integrated care, but the real winners are the patients they're helping."

The *Community Referrals by EMS* project is designed to provide local paramedics with a new option for linking people in South East Toronto with community health and support services. For a variety of reasons, many people have difficulty accessing existing and health and social services. As a result, some residents in South East Toronto are frequently relying on EMS for non-emergency assistance. Often, the paramedics feel they were not able to do enough to help people in these circumstances as, up until now, they have only had two options for helping people after administering medical treatment: transporting them to a hospital emergency department or leaving them at home. The Community Referrals by EMS Project provides a community service option to paramedics – and the benefits of doing so are huge.

"This innovative project will result in more appropriate use of 911, EMS services and Toronto East General Hospital emergency department resources by enhancing the ability of local paramedics to connect at-risk community members with the community health and support services that exist in South East Toronto. Most importantly, it will increase the quality of life for adults in this community," notes Dean Shaddock, Coordinator, Community Medicine Program, Toronto EMS.

The model also has the potential to benefit other communities. "The beauty of the *Solutions CREMS* project is that it is a simple solution that has a low cost to implement and has a potentially high cost benefit for the health care system. Since EMS, Community Care Access Centres, community support service agencies and hospitals provide care in all communities across the province this is a model of collaboration that could easily be transferred across the province," notes Eileen Ryan, Executive Director, East York Access Centre.

In fact, *Solutions* has already received inquiries and encouragement from health care providers from across the city, province and country that are eager for the pilot project to be completed so the model can be implemented in their communities.

"We are proud that the leadership and innovation demonstrated by *Solutions* is being recognized by the Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care and by health care leaders across the country," notes Rob Devitt, President & CEO of Toronto East General Hospital. "*Solutions* is an excellent example of how health care providers can proactively work together to enhance the integration of care delivery for the communities that we serve."

**For more information contact:**

Laura Visser, Manager, Planning, Partnerships and Public Relations  
Toronto East General Hospital  
(416) 469-6580 ext 7738

**Solutions – East Toronto’s Health Collaborative** is a voluntary network of health organizations that is replacing barriers in the health care system with solutions that create a coherent, well-integrated, coordinated and appropriately funded system of care and support for the people of South East Toronto. Members have been collaborating since 2002 and include:

- Albany Medical Clinic
- Community Care East York
- COTA Health
- East York Access Centre
- Nisbet Lodge
- Partners for Health
- Senior Link – Neighbourhood Link
- SETo
- Sherbourne Health Centre
- South Riverdale Community Health Centre
- Toronto Community Care Access Centre
- Toronto East General Hospital
- Toronto EMS
- Wellesley Institute
- Woodgreen Community Services