

Crisis coming with chronic disease, council warns

TORONTO (CP) — One in three Ontario residents is fighting a chronic disease and the government must act urgently before it has a “full-blown crisis” on its hands, the chairman of the Ontario Health Quality Council said on Monday.

In releasing the council’s annual report on the state of health care, Ray Hession said chronic disease continues to be a huge burden on resources and should be government’s No. 1 priority.

“We need to start dealing with this challenge urgently, decisively and effectively,” Hession said.

“Chronic diseases in Ontario is the budget-eating disease confronting the health system.”

Even though at least 60 per cent of total health-care costs are already associated with chronic diseases, the council said the government has to pay even more attention to ailments such as asthma, arthritis, diabetes and heart problems.

With an aging population increasingly stressing the system, action needs to be taken now to fight conditions that are often preventable or treatable, Hession said.

“In the context of health care, this is an inconvenient truth,” Hession said, a reference to the documentary chronicling former U.S. vice-president Al Gore’s campaign against global warming.

Almost four in five Ontario residents over the age of 65 have at least one chronic disease, and of those, 70 per cent suffer from two or more conditions.

Hession said obesity is fuelling the rise of many diseases. Getting people to eat better and stay active, and giving them safe and meaningful work in a healthy environment could prevent 80 per cent of coronary heart disease and Type 2 diabetes, he said.

This block contains a collage of various small advertisements and notices. At the top right, there is an advertisement for a "WELL TREATER FOR DOGS" featuring a picture of a dog. Below that, there is a "GET THE LESS" advertisement. In the middle, there is a "SUMMER 2007 DAY CAMP BROCHURE" advertisement for YIMCA (Young In Motion for Kids and Adults). At the bottom, there is a "YIMCA" advertisement. The collage also includes several other smaller, less legible advertisements and notices.