

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LEADING CANCER ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESS
THE CONCERNS OF ONTARIO BREAST CANCER PATIENTS**

**Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation Unveils Findings from
Research into Breast Cancer Care in Ontario**

Toronto, Ontario – February 20, 2007 – On behalf of a partnership of Ontario cancer organizations, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation - Ontario Chapter today unveiled findings from a first-of-its-kind research initiative focusing on the experiences of Ontario women diagnosed with breast cancer. The research report, entitled *Toward Kinder Care: Tracing Women's Experience of Breast Cancer*, highlights structural weaknesses in the breast cancer care system. Participants involved in the research overwhelmingly reported an uncoordinated experience and described how it compromised their care, stating that patients “should not have to struggle with the system while struggling with cancer.”

The report represents the completion of a research inquiry called Up Front: New Perspectives on Breast Cancer. The inquiry was led by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation - Ontario Chapter in collaboration with leading cancer organizations: Willow Breast Cancer Support Canada, the Canadian Breast Cancer Network, the Ontario Breast Screening Program of Cancer Care Ontario, and the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation and its Breast Centre Women's Committee.

“Women from all over Ontario told us they had expected more from cancer care. Our research findings suggest a more integrated system of care is needed,” said Sharon Wood, Executive Director, Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation - Ontario Chapter. “The findings of this research will enable the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, project partners, and other parties to take action to strengthen the current system so it allows for informed participation, emotional support, and timeliness – treating the person, not just the disease.”

Toward Kinder Care offers a series of recommendations identifying how care could be optimized. Recommendations have been made in the areas of education and prevention, screening mammography, coordinated treatment and care, and financial supports.

A breast cancer diagnosis is a life-altering experience for any woman, but also an everyday reality for Ontario's health care system where it occurs more than 8,000 times per year. Research participants had concurring observations about the standard of care they received, and indicated that while significant advances have been made in breast cancer care, people are still facing considerable challenges both during and after their diagnosis.

- more -

Leading Cancer Organizations Address the Concerns of Ontario Breast Cancer Patients/2

From experiencing booking errors to finding themselves a “go between” among professionals, participants described how their stress increased by having to coordinate and manage their own care while trying to navigate the system without necessary emotional support. These challenges also extended to participants’ families and friends, who played a key role in supporting them through their experience.

“The health care team dedicated to my treatment and recovery was committed and caring,” says Ontario resident Nancy Noble, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004. “However, as I was trying to navigate my way through the cancer system, I was faced with numerous hurdles which added to the emotional distress I was already experiencing.”

The report also acknowledges the difficult experiences that dedicated health care professionals can have with the breast cancer care system, which does not always allow them effective, coordinated care.

Dr. Ruth Heisey, a family physician at Women's College Hospital and a GP oncologist at Princess Margaret Hospital said she was not surprised by the findings. “Through this report women have given us a clear message about the type of improved care they desire. They want a timely diagnosis of their cancer, shared decision-making, coordinated care and better emotional support along the way.”

To gain an accurate understanding of the breast cancer care environment in Ontario, a range of research methods was used including interviews, focus groups, community consultations and a public opinion survey. Research participants were former patients, their personal caregivers, health care professionals, and Ontario women who have not experienced a breast cancer diagnosis.

Funders of *Up Front: New Perspectives on Breast Cancer* include the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation - Ontario Chapter, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, RE/MAX Ontario-Atlantic Canada, and the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation Breast Centre Women’s Committee.

While the findings of earlier stages of Up Front research were released in 2006, the entire initiative was carried out over a three-year period and involved a number of methods which allowed women’s experiences to be brought into focus. *Toward Kinder Care: Tracing Women’s Experience of Breast Cancer* and more information about the entire *Up Front* initiative can be accessed through the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation - Ontario Chapter website at www.cbcf.org/ontario or through the project website at www.upfrontproject.ca.

- more -

Leading Cancer Organizations Address the Concerns of Ontario Breast Cancer Patients/3

Breast Cancer Statistics

In Canada, it is estimated that 22,300 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, making it the most prevalent cancer among Canadian women.¹ On average, one in nine women in Canada will develop breast cancer in her lifetime, and one in 27 is expected to die from the disease.¹ This means that two-thirds of women diagnosed with breast cancer will not die of the disease. In Ontario, an estimated 8,400 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in Ontario in 2006, and an estimated 2,000 women died of the disease.¹ There are approximately 50,000 women living in Ontario who were diagnosed with breast cancer in the past 10 years.²

About the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation - Ontario Chapter

As the leading national volunteer-based organization dedicated to creating a future without breast cancer, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation works collaboratively to fund, support and advocate for relevant and innovative breast cancer research, meaningful education and awareness programs, early diagnosis and effective treatment, and a positive quality of life for those living with breast cancer. Founded in 1986, the Foundation has chapters in BC/Yukon, Prairies/NWT, Ontario and the Atlantic provinces. The Foundation also partners with important organizations such as the Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation to support initiatives such as the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation CIBC Run for the Cure in that province. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.cbcf.org.

-30-

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Michelle Marchione/Julie Belissimo/Meredith Sjogren
NATIONAL Public Relations
(416) 586 0180

Lisa Marchitto / Victoria Pearson
Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Ontario Chapter
(416) 815-1313 x500 / 510

¹Canadian Cancer Society/National Cancer Institute of Canada. *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2006*. Toronto, Canada, 2006.

²Cancer Care Ontario. Ontario Cancer Facts, "What Cancers are Ontarians living with?" Toronto, Canada, April 2004.