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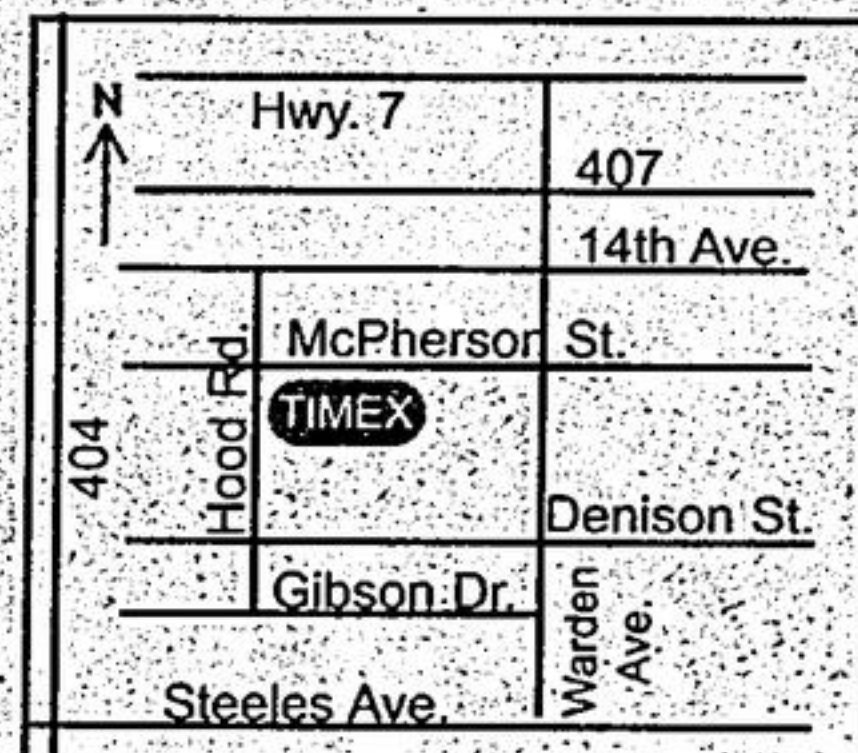
WHEN: Friday, October 4th, 5:00pm-9:00pm
Saturday, October 5th, 9:00am-6:00pm
Sunday, October 6th, 9:00am-6:00pm

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One nurse practitioner allotted to region

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

Although countless York Region residents can't find a family doctor, the region is getting just one nurse practitioner under a provincial plan to ease Ontario's physician shortage.

Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees praised his government's move to open up 369 nurse practitioner jobs across the province over the next 18 months at a cost of \$40.6 million.

But he admits he was startled to discover the region is only getting one nurse practitioner in the first round of 117 positions that will come on line within the next year.

"The first question I asked of the min-

istry was, 'Why only one for York Region?' I'm sure the same question was asked by everyone," Mr. Klees said.

"The ministry said the applications were reviewed and priorities were based on need. There are obviously other areas of the province, in Northern Ontario and rural areas, it's a large province, where the need is higher than here."

Mr. Klees argued, although it is inconvenient and difficult for patients in rural areas of York to get medical attention, there are ways of accessing health care in nearby communities.

"We can just keep our fingers crossed and hope (more will be allocated in future rounds).

To me, the numbers are completely unacceptable."

Those options are not available in more isolated areas of the province.

Mr. Klees is confident the government will allocate more nurse practitioners for York in the next round of job openings.

Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have taken additional training that allows them to diagnose diseases and ailments. They can treat minor illnesses, prescribe some medications and carry out certain procedures such as pap smears.

Georgina Councillor John Hastings is a member of the town's health care council, which is desperately searching for physicians for the community.

He's outraged the province is only allocating one nurse practitioner for York, especially since both Georgina and East Gwillimbury have been designated by Queen's Park as medically underserved areas.

"I can hardly believe there would only be one. The numbers boggle the mind. I won't be critical if the one ends up in Georgina. It's a start," he said.

"We can just keep our fingers crossed and hope (more will be allocated in future rounds). To me, the numbers are completely unacceptable."

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