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## **CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH RELEASES PLAN TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC HEALTH IN MUSKOKA-PARRY SOUND**

*Two New Public Health Units Created*

**GRAVENHURST** – Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Sheela Basrur, today announced a merger plan for the Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit that will create two new public health units: the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.

“This merger is designed to strengthen public health services,” said Dr. Basrur. “The residents of Muskoka and Parry Sound will be able to count on the leadership of a full-time experienced medical officer of health, a stronger management team, an on-call system staffed by public health nurses and public health inspectors, tested emergency policies and procedures, and infectious disease expertise.”

In October 2004, Dr. Basrur assumed the powers of the Muskoka-Parry Sound Board of Health under Section 86 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Dr. Basrur appointed Graham Scott, former Deputy Minister of Health, to examine the governance and operations of the board. In his assessment, Mr. Scott described the overall governance and operation of the board as “dysfunctional”, adding that the board had failed to comply with basic governance requirements. Acting on Mr. Scott’s recommendation, Dr. Basrur is merging the Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit with neighbouring public health units in North Bay and Simcoe County.

The merger takes effect April 1, 2005. The appointment of board of health members will be announced shortly. Residents will continue to access all programs and services through the same local health units.

Staff have been assigned to the new public health units and the Gravenhurst public health office will be maintained and operated by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.

“The government is committed to supporting this merger in a way that is fair and equitable for the municipalities and residents in the affected areas,” said Dr. Basrur.

The transition is expected to be complete by April 1, 2006 at an estimated cost of \$3.7 million to the provincial government.

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For further information:

Members of the media:

Eva Lannon  
Minister’s Office  
(416) 327-4320

Dan Strasbourg  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
(416) 314-6197

Members of the general public: (416) 327-4327, or (800) 268-1154

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