

April 6, 2005  
2005/nr-031

## ONTARIO HEALTH MINISTER WELCOMES REPORT ON WAIT TIMES *Sets Baseline For Government To Measure Key Healthcare Results*

**TORONTO** – Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman today welcomed the wait times report by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES), saying it's a crucial part of the McGuinty government's wait time plan to ensure Ontarians are treated sooner.

"We commissioned this report from ICES to get a better understanding of the state of wait times in Ontario for five key health care services," Smitherman said. "The report gives us accurate information on how long people were waiting for these vital services before we initiated our wait times strategy and other parts of our health care transformation plan."

In its report, *Access to Health Services in Ontario: ICES Atlas*, ICES studies wait times for selected cancer surgeries, selected cardiac procedures, cataract surgery, and total hip and knee replacements, as well as the volume of CT and MRI scans. All baseline wait times are from 2003/2004, before the government began its wait time strategy.

The report also compares wait times for each of the 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINS) the government is developing. Smitherman emphasized that LHINS will allow the government to tackle local wait time challenges and reduce regional gaps in access to health services.

Smitherman said ICES has a critical role because it will provide objective, independent verification about wait times by which Ontarians can measure the success of the government's plan to improve access to health services. The Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences is an internationally recognized authority on health information and performance.

"The data in the ICES report is proof of the need for the province's wait times plan, which is well underway," said Dr. Alan Hudson, Lead, Ontario Wait Time Strategy. "We are attacking the problem of wait times by increasing surgical and diagnostic capacity, collecting data on wait times, improving efficiencies in the health care system so more people can be treated; and developing a consistent method of prioritizing patients waiting for care."

The government will post the ICES wait time data on its wait time strategy website within weeks. The Provincial, Territorial Task Group on Wait Times, chaired by Ontario, is charged with developing common wait time benchmarks for the five key health services. With the ICES data, Ontario will lead the way in establishing Canada-wide wait time standards.

Today's announcement is part of the McGuinty government's comprehensive plan to improve health care in Ontario. It's a plan that includes reducing wait times for key procedures, creating Family Health Teams, increasing the number of doctors and nurses, and investing heavily in community-based health care in order to ease the pressure on hospitals and deliver care where people need it most.

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

This news release, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca> under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: [www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca](http://www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca).

Version française disponible