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FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS BRINGING BETTER CARE TO TORONTO

McGuinty Government Approves Four Teams In Toronto

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is providing better access to better health care in Toronto with the creation of four Family Health Teams, part of the 52 Family Health Teams and three networks of Family Health Teams approved province-wide, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

Family Health Teams (FHTs) include doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals working together to provide comprehensive care day and night, seven days a week. This includes access by phone to a registered nurse. Physicians working in an inter-disciplinary team model can care for up to 52 per cent more patients than those working in a solo practice.

"We're changing the way health care is delivered in Toronto by making it more responsive to the needs of the community," said Smitherman. "More patients in this city will now have access to a family doctor and health team of their own to help keep them healthy and treat them when they get sick."

Minister Smitherman made the announcement at the Seaton House FHT, which is part of a combined team with St. Michael's Urban Angels FHT, and will specialize in delivering care to the homeless. The other three FHTs in Toronto are the Mount Sinai FHT, Sunnybrook and Women's College FHT, and the St. Joseph's Health Centre Family Medicine Urban Health Clinic.

Thirty-five of the new Family Health Teams will be located in communities designated as underserved with respect to family physicians.

"What this means is that thousands of so-called orphan patients, who do not have access to the most basic health care, will soon be receiving treatment not only from a doctor but from a whole team of dedicated health care professionals," said Smitherman.

"As the representative of Ontario's new physicians, we are very encouraged that the government is moving forward on this initiative", said Dr. Danielle Martin, President, Professional Association of Interns and Residents of Ontario (PAIRO). "New physicians are looking to practice in improved models of health care delivery, including inter-professional teams. PAIRO believes that Family Health Teams can be an important next step in providing better health care, and access to health care, for all Ontarians."

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

For further information:

Members of the media:

David Spencer
Minister's Office
(416) 327-3984

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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