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HEALTH MINISTER RELEASES REPORT ON THE INTEGRATION OF SERVICES IN NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Report Is Valuable Advice For North West Ontario Local Health Integration Network

THUNDER BAY – Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman today released a report developed by Special Advisor Tom Closson that will serve as valuable advice for integrating and improving health services for northwestern Ontario residents.

“I want to thank Tom Closson for spearheading a truly collaborative and comprehensive report and the steering committee for their energy and ideas,” Smitherman said. “The analysis and recommendations will be invaluable to the North West Ontario Local Health Integration Network as it works to improve local health services for area residents.”

Smitherman provided the report to Dr. John Whitfield, Chair, North West Ontario LHIN, today to use in local health planning efforts. Smitherman said that the report may serve as a model for how LHINs across the province can approach local health care planning.

Last May, Closson, then president and CEO of the University Health Network, was named by the government to work with the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, other local providers and the ministry on a plan to help the hospital better achieve its role as a regional hospital and to improve health service integration throughout northwestern Ontario.

The Closson report contains 21 recommendations on how to better integrate and coordinate local health care services, including acute hospital care, primary care, long-term care, mental health and addiction and regional health management.

“The North West Ontario LHIN will carefully consider the recommendations in Tom Closson’s report,” said Whitfield. “The insights and advice were the result of broad community input and will challenge us to work together to raise the quality of local health care.”

“It is my hope that Mr. Closson’s recommendations will allow us to solve the challenges of providing equitable and appropriate care to the diverse communities that make up the north west,” said Michael Gravelle, MPP Thunder Bay-Superior North. “The recommendations will help ensure that Thunder Bay Regional Hospital is open to the entire region.”

The report is available on the ministry’s website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca>.

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government’s plan to build a health care system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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