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## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INCREASING PROTECTION FOR NEWBORNS** *Expanding Screening Program For Inherited Metabolic Disorders From Two To 21 Tests*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government will expand its newborn screening program by adding 19 tests for inherited metabolic disorders (IMDs) for all children born in Ontario, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today. It is the first expansion of the screening program in 27 years.

“There is nothing more important than keeping our children healthy and providing them with the best possible care,” Smitherman said. “We are expanding our newborn screening program so that we can identify infants with these problems quickly and get them the treatment they need when they need it.”

Currently, Ontario tests for phenylketonuria (PKU) and congenital hypothyroidism (CH). Beginning in 2006, the government will phase in 19 new tests for Inherited Metabolic Disorders. These IMDs are very rare, affecting only approximately one in 2000 newborns, but they can cause serious health difficulties and in some rare cases even death. Three new Tandem Mass Spectrometry machines will be purchased to allow Ontario’s enhanced newborn screening program to test for these additional IMDs, ensuring immediate treatment.

The expanded screening panel is based on a preliminary recommendation of the Newborn Screening Subcommittee of the Ontario Advisory Committee on Genetics.

“I want to thank the subcommittee for its excellent work,” Smitherman said. “I am looking forward to additional recommendations later this year on the further expansion of Ontario’s newborn screening program.”

“This expansion in newborn screening will ensure a number of conditions are caught and treated early,” said Dr. Joe Clarke, chair of the Advisory Committee on Newborn Genetics and head of clinical metabolic genetics at The Hospital for Sick Children. “Many children will be saved from potentially disastrous consequences.”

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government's commitment to build a health care system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and improving access to doctors and nurses.

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