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NEW HEALTH QUALITY COUNCIL TO MONITOR HEALTH CARE
New Body To Report On Health Care System Performance

TORONTO - The McGuinty Government is launching the Ontario Health Quality Council, an independent body formed to monitor the health care system and report to the public on how well it is performing, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"The Ontario Health Quality Council is going to tell the health care story to Ontarians in a way that has never been done before," Smitherman said. "Through the council, Ontarians will be engaged in the health care discussion, and be able to hold our government accountable for the progress we're making in health care, beginning with reducing wait times."

This new monitoring council will deliver an annual report on how the health system is performing, with the first report expected by Spring 2006. Included in these reports will be the progress the government is making on health priorities like wait times, the creation of Family Health Teams, and promotion of health and wellness.

Ray Hession, retiring chair of the board of governors at The Ottawa Hospital, will be the chair of the council with Victoria Grant, a former co-ordinator with the Noojimawin Health Authority in Toronto, serving as vice-chair.

"This new council, on which I am proud to serve, is a clear demonstration of our province's commitment to medicare," Hession said. "Our first priority will be to organize the council's business and establish a work plan, and we will begin work on our first report to Ontarians on the state of the health care system."

"I look forward to working with this outstanding group to keep Ontarians informed about the state of the province's health care system," said Lyn McLeod, current provincial representative on the Health Council of Canada, who was named as a cross appointment. "The work of this council will complement what's happening at the national level with the Health Council of Canada."

"We're very fortunate to have a tremendous group of individuals with a great deal of health care experience and knowledge serving on this new council," Smitherman said. "By engaging Ontarians in a dialogue about their health care system, they are going to help us improve that system and help Ontarians keep track of those improvements."

"I have been clear that new money must buy real change, that stronger accountability to the people regarding progress is essential", said Roy Romanow, former Royal Commissioner on health care. "This new council is a very promising addition to Ontario's bold health care reforms."

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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