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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT EXPANDING ACCESS TO STROKE CARE IN ONTARIO

Ontario Stroke Strategy Saving Lives, Improving Access to Life-Saving Treatment

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is expanding access to stroke care in Ontario, building on a Stroke Strategy that is saving lives, reducing wait times for treatment, and improving the health and quality of life of stroke patients, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today. Smitherman designated one more district stroke centre and five more stroke prevention clinics across the province.

“We are ensuring that all Ontarians have access to quality stroke care as soon as possible,” Smitherman said. “We now have put all the pieces in place for a fully functioning regional stroke care system that will ensure that people affected by strokes get the care they need, when and where they need it.”

Smitherman announced the designation of a new district stroke centre at Huntsville District Memorial Hospital, and five new stroke prevention clinics – Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, Brantford General Hospital, Bluewater Health in Sarnia, St. Joseph’s Healthcare in Hamilton, and Hawkesbury and District General Hospital. The announcement includes \$977,500 in 2005-06 to the newly designated centre and clinics for the establishment of their stroke services across their respective regions.

With today’s announcement, the McGuinty government has completed the task of putting together an integrated stroke care system consisting of nine regional stroke centres, 18 district stroke centres and 24 stroke prevention clinics. This system will ensure patients throughout the province can receive rapid diagnosis and treatment as well as improved follow-up care within the community.

“Quick response is critical in dealing with strokes,” said Smitherman. “As a result of this regional stroke care system, lives are being saved and there is an improvement in the quality of life of people affected by strokes.”

Initial evaluation of the Ontario Stroke Strategy by the Stroke Evaluation Advisory Committee indicates that Ontario’s stroke care system is already having a positive impact:

- 63 per cent of stroke cases are referred to a stroke clinic, compared to only nine per cent in 1997-98

- The time it takes for patients needing life-saving clot-busting drugs to receive treatment has decreased by 35 per cent since 2000
- In-hospital stroke mortality rate has declined from 17.2 per cent in 1997-98 to 15.9 per cent so more people are surviving and having the opportunity to live healthy productive lives.

“Thanks to an exciting partnership with health care providers, the Ontario government and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, this province is now an international leader in stroke care,” said Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario CEO, Rocco Rossi. “The Foundation is proud to have played a leadership role in creating the model for the Ontario Stroke Strategy to ensure Ontarians can access the best stroke care possible.”

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

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