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MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT HELPING PROTECT ONTARIANS FROM THE FLU

Free Flu Shots Available To All Ontarians

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is encouraging Ontarians to protect themselves and others by taking advantage of the free flu shots that are available once again this year, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“The flu can spread to others with just one sneeze,” Smitherman said. “It is serious and contagious but also a preventable disease. You can’t get the flu from a flu shot, but you can certainly protect yourself and those around you, just by getting vaccinated.”

Ontario’s Universal Influenza Immunization Program – the only one of its kind in North America – is in its sixth year. Flu shots are free to anyone aged six months or older who lives, works or attends school in Ontario, and are available across the province through doctors’ offices as well as public flu shot clinics offered by:

- Public health units
- Local pharmacies
- Community health centres
- Hospitals
- Long-term care homes
- Community care access centres
- Employer-sponsored clinics

Parents are strongly encouraged to get their children vaccinated.

“Children aged six to 23 months are at high risk of hospitalization from flu complications,” said Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. “This year we are encouraging everyone to get the flu shot, especially children as they spread the flu easily at school and at home.”

The flu can also have serious health consequences for the elderly and those with medical conditions.

“We hope flu shots will become part of everyone’s annual routine. It’s not only good for your health, it’s good for the economy. Influenza and pneumonia can cost our health care system up to \$195 million,” said Health Promotion Minister Jim Watson.

The flu shot campaign will be advertised in many languages through television, radio and newspapers. To find a convenient flu clinic location, call 1-877-844-1944; TTY 1-800-387-5559; or visit www.health.gov.on.ca. More information can also be found on www.HealthyOntario.com.

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This news release, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca> under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca.

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