

For Immediate Release
November 30, 2005
2005/nr-117

MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT IMPROVING DIABETES CARE *New Education And Care Teams To Help 69,000 Ontarians*

TORONTO — The McGuinty government is improving the health and quality of life of people suffering from diabetes with the creation of 69 new diabetes education and care teams, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“These teams, each of which consists of a nurse and a dietitian, will help 69,000 more Ontarians who live with this serious condition,” said Smitherman. “We’re building a disease management and prevention system that responds to patient and community needs, and delivers quality care.”

The government is investing \$15 million in new funding for the development of the 69 new diabetes education and care teams across Ontario. This new money brings the total investment to \$34-million, representing an increase of 79 per cent over last year’s funding.

Diabetes education and care teams help clients take an active role in the day-to-day management of their condition. Through multi-disciplinary group classes and one-on-one counselling at hospitals and community health centres, these teams will offer education on how to manage diets, check blood sugar levels, monitor overall health and provide regular medical check-ups.

“Diabetes is a serious and growing issue in Ontario,” said Donna Lillie, Vice President, Research and Professional Education, Canadian Diabetes Association. “The investment in increased access to education and care is essential for better outcomes for people affected by diabetes.”

Diabetes is a chronic condition resulting from the body’s inability to sufficiently produce and/or properly use insulin, which assists with the conversion of glucose into energy. Without insulin, glucose cannot be sufficiently absorbed from the bloodstream into the cells of the body. Chronic high levels of blood glucose due to diabetes can lead to long-term damage, dysfunction and failure of the kidneys, eyes, nerves, heart and blood vessels.

“Today’s announcement is going to mean the ability to expand our diabetes programs to reach people who have historically had less access to diabetes education and treatment,” said Lynne Raskin, Executive Director, South Riverdale Community Health Centre. “It will allow us to build on the Chinese, Urdu and Tamil programs we have developed, our community kitchen project and expand services to people who have mental health challenges.”

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 improving access to doctors and nurses.

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