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## **MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT MAKING PROGRESS ON WAIT TIMES**

### *Ontario Sets Wait Times Access Targets In Five Key Areas*

TORONTO – Ontario is taking decisive action to shorten wait times for patients by establishing wait time access targets in five key areas – cancer surgery, cardiac bypass surgery, cataract surgery, hip and knee replacement and MRI and CT scans – Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

Earlier this week, provincial and territorial health ministers announced common national benchmarks for 10 key medical services. In setting targets for the five key services which are part of its Wait Times Strategy, the Ontario government has taken an even more aggressive approach to shortening wait times.

“These targets will serve as important goals for hospitals, Local Health Integration Networks and for the government as we work to improve access,” said Smitherman. “They will also allow Ontarians to measure our progress as we move to reduce wait times.”

Ontario’s access targets were developed after consultation with clinical experts from across Ontario. They reflect a new priority system being developed to better and more consistently manage the way patients access key services across the province, based on the urgency of their need for treatment.

“We’ve been significantly increasing the number of surgeries and now we have a yardstick to measure against and a goal to aim at for improvement,” said Dr. Jonathan Irish, Chair of the Cancer Surgery Wait Times Expert Panel and Chief of Surgical Oncology at University Health Network.

“These targets are part of a larger plan to shorten wait times across the province through the government’s Wait Times Strategy,” said Dr. Alan Hudson, who is leading the plan’s implementation. “We are building a new system where surgery is co-ordinated across the province to ensure patients get the timely care they need, and that those who need care the most are treated first.”

Other elements of Ontario’s Wait Times Strategy include significantly increasing the number of procedures to reduce the backlog that has developed over the last decade, investments in new, more efficient technology such as MRI machines, standardizing best practices for both medical and administrative functions, and collecting and reporting accurate and up-to-date data on wait times to allow better decision making and increase accountability.

The following chart outlines Ontario’s five access target areas, comparing them where applicable to the pan-Canadian benchmarks announced earlier this week.

Service Area	Pan-Canadian Benchmarks Announced Dec 12, 2005	Ontario's targets (in weeks) Announced Today
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<b>Cataract Surgery</b>	<b>16 weeks for patients at risk (which correlates with Ontario's PIII priority rating)</b>	<b>Priority I: Immediate</b>
		<b>Priority II: 6 weeks</b>
		<b>Priority III: 12 weeks</b>
		<b>Priority IV: 26 weeks</b>
<b>Hip/Knee Replacement</b>	<b>26 weeks</b>	<b>PI: Immediate PII: 6 weeks PIII: 12 weeks PIV: 26 weeks</b>
<b>Cardiac-Bypass Surgery</b>	<b>No benchmarks</b>	<b>PI: Immediate</b>
	<b>Level 1: 2 weeks</b>	<b>PII: 2 weeks</b>
	<b>Level 2: 6 weeks</b>	<b>PIII: 6 weeks</b>
	<b>Level 3: 26 weeks</b>	<b>PIV: 26 weeks</b>
<b>MRI/CT Scans</b>	<b>No benchmarks</b>	<b>PI: Immediate PII: 48 hours PIII: 2 - 10 days PIV: 4 weeks</b>
<b>Cancer Surgery</b>	<b>No benchmarks</b>	<b>PI: Immediate PII: 2 weeks PIII: 4 weeks PIV: 12 weeks</b>

In the other service areas identified in Monday's announcement, Ontario has embraced the pan-Canadian benchmarks: cancer radiation treatment - four weeks of being ready to treat; surgery for hip fractures – two days; mammograms for patients between 50 to 69 – every two years; cervical screening ages 18 to 69 after two normal scans – every three years.

More information on Ontario's Wait Times Strategy, as well as current wait times, are available at: [www.ontariowaittimes.com](http://www.ontariowaittimes.com).

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