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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES COMPREHENSIVE LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN HEALTH SYSTEM

*Bill To Promote Public Health, Increase Access To Services And Strengthen Patients' Complaints
Processes*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is working to transform health care in Ontario by introducing a bill that, if passed, will promote greater accountability, expand protection for patients, advance public health, and increase access to services for all Ontarians, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Since taking office, the McGuinty government has delivered on its commitment to further improve the province’s health care system to provide better quality care for Ontarians,” said Smitherman. “With this bill, we will continue with our transformation agenda to provide greater access to services, usher in a new era for public health in Ontario, and better protect public safety.”

The Health System Improvements Bill proposes changes to various existing laws that, among other things, would:

- **Promote greater accountability** - The bill proposes a new medical billing review process and review board for checking physicians’ Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) billings, based on the recommendations of the Cory Report. This would include more professional education, payment review, a new review board, and an appeal process that would restore confidence in the system, while maintaining greater accountability to patients, doctors and the government.
- **Better protect patients** - The bill would enhance regulatory colleges’ complaints procedures by giving patients increased access to information, improve communications and streamline processes.
- **Promote public health** – The government intends to establish the first-ever Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion – a centre for public health excellence that will provide research, scientific and technical advice and support, modeled after the Centers for Disease Control.
- **Increase patient access to services** – The government would enhance services that optometrists and dental hygienists provide, and establish new colleges to regulate four more health professions - naturopathy, homeopathy, kinesiology and psychotherapy. In addition to regulating Traditional Chinese Medicine, this is the first time since 1991 that new colleges have been established to regulate new health professions.

“The bottom line is that the Health System Improvements Bill would do just that – improve Ontario’s health care system,” said Smitherman. “Our government won’t stop working to improve access to quality health care for all Ontarians. We continue to transform the system for the better.”

The proposed changes to legislation are a part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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