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## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON HEALTH CARE** *Government Wants To Hear From Ontarians On 10-Year Health Plan*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is reaching out to Ontarians to get their input in developing a 10-year strategic plan for the province’s health care system, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We need to hear from as many Ontarians as possible to help the government form strategies to meet their health needs in the future,” Smitherman said. “Our health care system serves all of us – we’re in it together. So we want people to have a say about how the system should be shaped over the coming decade, and ensure that Ontarians have a long-term strategic plan for health care reflecting their values, priorities and concerns.”

During this public engagement with Ontarians, the government will:

- Engage a broad range of Ontarians – including the public and health care organizations – through focus groups, one-day sessions, telephone surveys and feedback from their local MPPs to discuss health care priorities and concerns.
- Get feedback from the public through a website ([www.ourplanforhealth.ca](http://www.ourplanforhealth.ca)) or phone (1-866-532-3161) where they can also get information on other ways to get involved and receive information materials.

The consultations will be part of the development of a strategic plan, which is a commitment legislated under the Local Health System Integration Act. These provincial consultations build on the advice received by the 14 Local Health Integration Networks during earlier discussions with providers and citizens.

The plan, which will be released in the spring of 2007, will set priorities and targets for improvements to be made in the health care system over the next 10 years. The targets will allow the public to track the progress achieved.

“It’s about time that more Ontarians are provided a chance to directly influence the way health care is delivered over the next decade,” said Smitherman.

The launch of the public engagement is just the latest example of the McGuinty government’s commitment to developing an improved health care system. Other initiatives include:

- Passing of the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, creating 14 Local Health Integration Networks to oversee the delivery of stronger, locally-planned health care

- Investing more than \$611 million in our Wait Times Strategy that has provided Ontarians with an additional 738,000 procedures – including MRI and CT scans; cancer, cardiac and cataract surgeries; and hip and knee replacements
- Creating 150 Family Health Teams, which will improve access to primary care for more than 2.5 million Ontarians
- Launching the HealthForceOntario strategy, including the creation of a marketing and recruitment centre to attract health care providers to Ontario
- Ensuring children are now benefiting from three new vaccines free of charge – with more than 1.2 million vaccinations already protecting children from chicken pox, meningococcal meningitis and pneumococcal disease
- Introducing the Health System Improvements Bill that includes proposed legislation to implement Operation Health Protection by establishing a new Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency.

Today's initiative is 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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