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## **MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT IMPROVES ACCESS TO DRUGS**

### *Reforming Drug System To Help Ontarians Live Healthier Lives*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is improving patient access to new and innovative therapies by adding 23 new brand-name drugs under the Ontario Drug Benefit Plan since the *Transparent Drug System for Patients Act*, came into effect October 1, 2006, said Health and Long Term Care Minister George Smitherman today.

“The McGuinty Government has worked hard to ensure increased access for patients to the drugs they need,” said Smitherman. “By reforming the drug system, we’re helping Ontario patients live healthier, longer lives.”

In addition to the new brand-name drugs, the government has also listed more than 24 additional generic brand products, including Apo-Omeprazole, a treatment for acid-reflux disease, which is expected to save the government \$30 million a year. This savings is a direct result of the new Act.

“By working with our pharmaceutical partners, we’re able to enter into agreements to list more drugs as well as increase our capacity to list generic products and invest those cost savings into our continued efforts to help patients gain even more access to new therapies,” said Smitherman.

The new law has also streamlined the health system – more specifically, as a result of new partnership agreements, 40,000 Section 8 requests are being eliminated, immediately reducing the paperwork for Ontario physicians.

Effective today, the government is adding the following 14 new drugs to the ODBP:

- Avandia (*Type 2 Diabetes*)
- Caduet tablets (*Cardiovascular drug*)
- Viread (*HIV/AIDS*)
- Aranesp (*Cancer chemotherapy-related anemia*)
- Eprex (*Cancer chemotherapy-related anemia*)
- Trelstar (*Prostate Cancer*)
- Gleevec (*Cancer- treatment of Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML)*)
- Crestor (*High cholesterol*)
- Fosavance (*Osteoporosis*)
- Fosamax (*Osteoporosis*)
- Pariet (*Acid Suppression*)
- Invirase (*HIV/AIDS*)
- Sandostatin SC (*Oncology and other indications*)
- Sandostatin LAR (*Oncology and other indications*)

The following nine drugs were already listed since October 1, 2006:

- Aclasta Solution ( *Paget's Disease* )
- Lipidil EZ tablets ( *High cholesterol* )
- Norprolac tablets ( *Hormone disorder* )
- Caduet tablets ( *Cardiovascular drug* )
- Videx EC ( *HIV/AIDS* )
- Tobi ( *Cystic Fibrosis* )
- Myfortic ( *Transplantation* )
- Xeloda ( *Colorectal Cancer and Breast Cancer* )
- Actos ( *Type 2 Diabetes* )

"I welcome better access to effective cancer drugs for patients." said Dr. James D. Gowing, Chair of the Cancer Advocacy Coalition of Canada and Hematologist/Oncologist at Cambridge Memorial Hospital. "Anemia for example, has a significant impact on the quality of life of cancer patients. It can also delay treatment which is always extremely distressing for both patients and physicians. Cancer patients will now have much better access to anemia treatments and this should be applauded."

This is just the latest example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families concerned about health care. Other initiatives include:

- Funding a post-market study on drug treatments for Fabry Disease that provides treatment to eligible patients
- Establishing an external task force to provide advice to the government on how to improve methadone treatment in the province.

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan to build a health care system that reflects the needs of patients and communities, and will keep Ontarians healthy for generations to come.

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