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## **Blue Sky Family Health Team Improving Access To Health Care In North Bay And Surrounding Areas**

*Opens for Business, Adds Dietitian, Social Worker and Registered Nurse*

**NORTH BAY** –The Blue Sky Family Health Team is open for business and providing better health care to North Bay area residents by adding the services of a dietitian, social worker and registered nurse, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We’re on the side of Ontario families who want and deserve the very best health care,” Smitherman said. “We have created Family Health Teams because we know they’re going to mean better access to better care for Ontarians. This additional health care expertise means that the Blue Sky Family Health Team is going to offer one-stop shopping for different health services.”

The Blue Sky Family Health Team is one of 150 Family Health Teams announced by the McGuinty government since April 2005.

Family Health Teams are designed around the needs of each community. They include physicians who work with other health care providers such as nurse practitioners, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, physician specialists, mental health workers and many others - depending on the need.

Family Health Teams also provide comprehensive care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. After hours, patients can call a registered nurse through the Telephone Health Advisory Service.

Today’s announcement is an important step in the development of the Blue Sky Family Health Team which now features a core group of 11 doctors, one dietitian, one social worker and one registered nurse. The three new health professionals are expected to help provide health care services to 3,000 additional patients.

The Blue Sky Family Health Team is open 363 days a year, emphasizing chronic disease management to its 24,000 patients, including those that require specialized care for diabetes, obesity, cholesterol management and lung disease. The team is working with the Nipissing University and Canadore College School of Nursing to develop training programs that help nurses and doctors to work together in teams.

“Over the last three years, our efforts to train physicians, nurses and other providers to work together in teams have made it possible for our practice to take on 3,000 more patients without adding any providers,” said Dr. Wendy Graham, Lead Physician, Blue Sky Family Health Team. “This reflects our team’s commitment to the community and to improving our health care system.”

“Family Health Teams are the next evolution in primary health care services and are changing the way health care is being delivered in North Bay and right across the province,” said Nipissing MPP Monique M. Smith. “They mean a stronger health care system now and for generations to come.”

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

- Creating 104 new first-year medical school spaces by 2009/10
- Investing \$75 million over three years to create an additional 22 Community Health Centres and 17 satellites
- Expanding the number of nurse practitioner education seats to 150 this September, one year ahead of schedule.

Today’s initiative is part of the McGuinty government’s plan for innovation in public health, 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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