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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVES PATIENT ACCESS TO DRUGS

New Act Will Lead to Better Value for Taxpayer Dollars

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is providing Ontario residents with better access to drugs while ensuring significant new savings with legislation that received third and final reading today, Health and Long Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced.

“We’re on the side of Ontarians who want and deserve better health care, especially those who will benefit from better access to medications,” said Smitherman. “The *Transparent Drug System for Patients Act* will allow our government to deliver better value for money to the taxpayers of Ontario.”

The government’s plan to reform the drug system includes:

- Achieving significant savings through volume discounts for all drugs purchased for the Ontario Drug Benefit Program
- Recognizing the valuable role of pharmacists in patient care by paying them for enhanced patient counselling and other professional services
- Freeing doctors of the burden of paperwork associated with Section 8 drugs
- Improving patient access to drugs through new conditional listings, Exceptional Access, and rapid reviews of innovative drugs
- Listening to the views of Ontarians through a new Citizen’s Council that will advise the Ministry on the social aspects of drug policies and priorities
- Utilizing the expertise of Ontario’s pharmacists through a new Pharmacy Council to advise the Ministry and the Executive Officer of the public drug programs
- Strengthening transparency by giving patients a role in drug listing decisions of the Committee to Evaluate Drugs

The government plan is expected to save up to \$277 million per year. These savings will be reinvested into the provincial drug system to support improved patient access to drugs. The province’s Ontario Drug Benefit program provides drug coverage for the 2.2 million Ontarians who are seniors or who receive social assistance or provincial disability support.

“One of the most important goals of this legislation is to recognize the significant role that pharmacists play in patient care,” said Smitherman. “That’s why we have worked with pharmacist groups to ensure the new legislation addresses their needs and the needs of their customers.”

"Bill 102 brings the most significant change to Ontario's public drug system," said Marc Kealey, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. "Ontario pharmacists are ready to assume an enhanced role in delivering front-line patient-centred care. The Ontario Pharmacists' Association looks forward to partnering with the government to ensure the long-term sustainability and financial viability of

pharmacy."

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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