

For Immediate Release

May 18, 2006

2006/nr-33

MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES *New Wait Time Data Show Double-Digit Drops For Health Services In Five Key Areas*

TORONTO – New data show the McGuinty government’s Wait Times Strategy is resulting in decreases in wait times province wide for health services in five key areas, 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, including reduced waiting times for health care services,” Smitherman said. “While it is still too early to declare victory, the trends are encouraging with double-digit drops in wait times for a number of key health services. Clearly, our Wait Times Strategy is improving access for patients.”

The government’s Wait Times Strategy focuses on five key areas: cancer surgery, cardiac procedures, hip and knee joint replacements, cataract surgery and MRI/CT exams. There are nine specific procedures within those five areas, and wait times in which 90 per cent of cases are completed have decreased in all nine areas since August/September 2005

- 41.1 per cent for angiography (23 days)
- 26.7 per cent for MRI scans (32 days)
- 25 per cent for angioplasty (seven days)
- 16.3 per cent cardiac bypass surgery (eight days)
- 14.8 per cent for CT scans (12 days)
- 10.2 per cent for knee replacement (45 days).
- 6.4 per cent for cataract surgery (20 days)
- 4.3 per cent for hip replacement (15 days)
- 3.7 per cent for cancer surgery (three days).

At the same time, the minister acknowledged that wait times for certain procedures in some Local Health Integration Networks remain a challenge.

“We will continue to work with hospitals on bringing about improvements in those areas where problems remain,” Smitherman said. “Furthermore, while provincial wait times for cardiac and cancer procedures have decreased somewhat and are below the access targets we set last December, there is still work to be done. We are committed to doing that work.”

Since the launch of the Wait Times Strategy, the government has invested \$410 million for additional procedures, including:

- 43,850 cataract surgeries (\$33 million)
- 18,210 hip and knee joint replacements (\$138.3 million)
- 16,650 cardiac procedures (\$128.6 million)
- 11,260 cancer surgeries (\$63.3 million)
- 182,700 MRI scans (\$47 million).

The new wait time data are available at www.ontariowaittimes.com which is closing in on the one-million mark with more than 950,000 hits as of today

“More and more Ontarians are seeing for themselves how our Wait Times Strategy is working,” said Dr. Alan Hudson, Lead of Ontario’s Wait Time Strategy. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help Ontarians better manage their wait times and continue this overall general reduction of wait times.”

The Wait Times Strategy 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.

-30-

Media Contacts:

David Spencer
Minister’s Office
416-327-4320

John Letherby
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 416-327-4327, or 1-800-268-1154

This news release, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca> under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca.

Disponible en français.