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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES *New Wait Time Data Show Double-Digit Drops in the North Simcoe Muskoka Area*

TORONTO – New data show the Ontario government’s Wait Times Strategy is resulting in decreases in wait times for key health services in the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network area, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“While we still have more work to do, the trends in the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN area are encouraging with double-digit drops in wait times for a number of key health services,” Smitherman said. “Clearly, the government’s Wait Times Strategy is having an effect in improving access to services for patients.”

As a result of the government’s Wait Times Strategy, wait times in which 90 per cent of cases are completed in the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 49.5 per cent for cancer surgery (54 days)
- 41.2 per cent for MRI scans (134 days)
- 21.4 per cent for cataract surgery (36 days)
- 18.8 per cent for hip replacement (57 days)
- 13.3 per cent for knee replacement (49 days)

Cancer surgery and cataract surgery are also below the access target set by the government last December.

At the same time, Smitherman acknowledged one health service area that remains a challenge – there has been a 9.6 per cent increase in wait times in CT scans since August/September 2005.

“We will continue to work with hospitals in the area on improving access to CT scans and we expect to see improvements in wait times in this area,” Smitherman said.

Since the launch of the Wait Times Strategy, the government has invested \$8.4 million for additional procedures in hospitals in the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN area, including:

- 735 cataract surgeries (\$0.5 million)
- 735 hip and knee joint replacements (\$5.2 million)
- 170 cancer surgeries (\$0.8 million)
- 7,270 MRI scans (\$2 million).

The new wait time data is 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 people in this area are seeing for themselves how the government’s Wait Times Strategy is working,” North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN Chair Ruben Rosen said. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help people and health care providers in our LHIN area to better manage their wait times and continue this overall general reduction of wait times.”

The Wait Times Strategy is part of the Ontario 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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