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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES
New Wait Time Data Show Double-Digit Drops in the Toronto Central 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 Toronto Central 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 Toronto Central 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 Toronto Central LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 37.0 per cent for knee replacement (178 days)
- 28.0 per cent for hip replacement (96 days)
- 27.1 per cent for cardiac bypass surgery (13 days)
- 12.1 per cent for angiography (four days)
- 11.4 per cent for CT scans (10 days).

Wait times for other key health services have also declined by:

- 9.1 per cent for angioplasty (two days)
- 6.5 per cent for cataract surgery (26 days)

Cardiac bypass surgery is also below the access target set by the government last December.

At the same time, Smitherman acknowledged two health service areas that remain a challenge – there has been a 3.5 per cent increase in wait times in cancer surgery and a 2.4 per cent rise in MRI scans since August/September 2005.

“We continue to make significant investments in cancer surgery and MRI scans, and we expect to see improvements in wait times for cancer surgery and MRI scans,” Smitherman said.

Since the launch of the Wait Times Strategy, the government has invested \$79.4 million for additional procedures in hospitals in the Toronto Central LHIN area, including:

- 3,075 cataract surgeries (\$2.3 million)

- 2,580 hip and knee joint replacements (\$22.3 million)
- 1,625 cardiac procedures (\$8.3 million)
- 3,055 cancer surgeries (\$19.5 million)
- 34,100 MRI scans (\$7 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,” Toronto Central LHIN Chair Penny Thomsen said. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help people and health care providers in the Toronto area 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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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

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