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## **ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES**

*New Wait Time Data Show Double-Digit Drops in the North West Area*

TORONTO – New data shows the Ontario government’s Wait Times Strategy is resulting in decreases in wait times for key health services in the North West 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 West 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 West LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 62.3 per cent for MRI scans (134 days)
- 31.4 per cent for angiography (16 days)
- 24.5 per cent for knee replacement (123 days)

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

- 7.0 per cent for cancer surgery (four days)

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

At the same time, Smitherman acknowledged three health service areas that remain a challenge – there has been a 38.6 per cent increase in wait times in hip replacement, 26.7 per cent rise in cataract surgery and 16.4 per cent increase in CT scans since August/September 2005.

“We continue to make significant investments in hip replacement and cataract surgery, and we expect to see improvements in wait times for these areas,” Smitherman said. “We will also work with hospitals in the area to improve the wait times for CT scans.”

Since the launch of the Wait Times Strategy, the government has invested \$10.5 million for additional procedures in hospitals in the North West LHIN area, including:

- 1,530 cataract surgeries (\$1.5 million)
- 715 hip and knee joint replacements (\$5 million)
- 120 cardiac procedures (\$281,150)
- 230 cancer surgeries (\$1 million)
- 11,040 MRI scans (\$2.8 million).

The new wait time data is available at [www.ontariowaittimes.com](http://www.ontariowaittimes.com), which is closing in on the one-million mark with more than 950,000 hits as of today.

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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