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

- 21.6 per cent for hip replacement (86 days)
- 17.8 per cent for cancer surgery (16 days)
- 13.3 per cent for cataract surgery (43 days)
- 11.5 per cent for CT scans (seven days)

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

- 8.0 per cent for MRI scans (six days)
- 2.6 per cent for knee replacement (eight days)

Cancer surgery is 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 39.1 per cent increase in wait times in angiography since August/September 2005.

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

Since the launch of the Wait Times Strategy, the Ontario government has invested \$27 million for additional procedures in hospitals in the Central East LHIN area, including:

- 5,400 cataract surgeries (\$4 million)
- 1,640 cardiac procedures (\$6 million)
- 1,540 hip and knee joint replacements (\$10.8 million)
- 1,030 cancer surgeries (\$4.3 million)

- 8,090 MRI (\$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,” Central East LHIN Chair Foster Loucks said. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help people and health care providers in central east Ontario 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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