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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

New Wait Time Data Show Double-Digit Drops in the Champlain 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 Champlain 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 Champlain 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 Champlain LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 80.9 per cent for MRI scans (262 days)
- 46.4 per cent for angioplasty (26 days)
- 33.3 per cent for cardiac bypass surgery (13 days)
- 20.2 per cent for angiography (17 days)

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

- 9.0 per cent for cataract surgery (31 days)
- 7.1 per cent for cancer surgery (eight days)
- 5.8 per cent for knee replacement (29 days)
- 4.9 per cent for CT scans (four days)

Cardiac bypass surgery is also well 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 1.3 per cent increase in wait times for hip replacement since August/September 2005.

“We continue to make significant investments in hip replacement 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 \$46.9 million for additional procedures in the Champlain LHIN area, including:

- 3,480 cataract surgeries (\$2 million)

- 2,390 cardiac procedures (\$17 million)
- 1,580 hip and knee joint replacements (\$13 million)
- 1,140 cancer surgeries (\$7.8 million)
- 27,440 MRI and CT 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 the Champlain area are seeing for themselves how the government’s Wait Times Strategy is working,” Champlain LHIN Chair Michel Lalonde said. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help people and health care providers in eastern 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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