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

- 38.5 per cent for angiography (10 days)
- 24.1 per cent for CT scans (27 days)
- 20.0 per cent for cataract surgery (32 days)

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

- 9.8 per cent for hip replacement (23 days)

Cataract 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 134.6 per cent increase in wait times in MRI scans, 34.0 per cent rise in knee replacement and 9.6 per cent increase in cancer surgery since August/September 2005.

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

Since the launch of the Wait Times Strategy, the government has invested \$11.5 million for additional procedures in hospitals in the Erie-St. Clair LHIN area, including:

- 2,780 cataract surgeries (\$2 million)
- 950 hip and knee joint replacements (\$6.6 million)
- 405 cardiac procedures (\$0.8 million)
- 295 cancer surgeries (\$1.1 million)
- 3,970 MRI scans (\$1 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 Erie-St. Clair area are seeing for themselves how the government’s Wait Times Strategy is working,” Erie-St. Clair LHIN Chair Mina Grossman-Ianni said. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help people and health care providers in south western 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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