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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

New Wait Time Data Shows Double-Digit Drops in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant 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 Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant 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 Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant 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 Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 67.0 per cent for angiography (59 days)
- 59.6 per cent for angioplasty (34 days)
- 23.4 per cent for cardiac bypass surgery (11 days)
- 13.9 per cent for CT scans (11 days)
- 11.3 per cent for MRI scans (14 days)

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

- 3.1 per cent for hip replacement (13 days)
- 2.4 per cent for cataract surgery (six days)

Cardiac bypass surgery and cancer surgery are 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 4.9 per cent increase in wait times in knee replacement and a 1.6 per cent rise in cancer surgery since August/September 2005.

“We continue to make significant investments in cancer surgery and knee replacement 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 \$57.8 million for additional procedures in hospitals in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN area, including:

- 5,460 cataract surgeries (\$4 million)
- 2,390 cardiac procedures (\$21.7 million)
- 2,180 hip and knee joint replacements (\$17.9 million)
- 1,520 cancer surgeries (\$9.5 million)
- 18,725 MRI scans (\$4.8 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,” Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN Chair Juanita Gledhill said. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help people and health care providers in our LHIN communities 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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