

For Immediate Release

May 18, 2006

2006/nr-042

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

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

- 52.5 per cent for angiography (31 days)
- 39.7 per cent for knee replacement (273 days)
- 19.0 per cent for CT scans (19 days)
- 18.4 per cent for cataract surgery (50 days)
- 18.5 per cent for MRI scans (10 days)
- 17.9 per cent for cardiac bypass surgery (seven days)

Cardiac bypass surgery and cancer surgery are 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 77.6 per cent increase in wait times for hip replacement, 23.5 per cent for angioplasty and 2.1 per cent for cancer surgery since August/September 2005.

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

Since the launch of the Wait Times Strategy, the government has invested \$16 million for additional procedures in hospitals in the North East LHIN area, including:

- 2,390 cataract surgeries (\$1.8 million)
- 1,385 cardiac procedures (\$6.2 million)
- 550 hip and knee joint replacements (\$3.3 million)
- 375 cancer surgeries (\$2 million)
- 11,425 MRI scans (\$3 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,” North East LHIN Chair Mathilde Gravelle Bazinet said. “We’re confident that the initiatives underway will continue to help people and health care providers in northeastern 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.

-30-

Media Contacts:

David Spencer
Minister’s Office
416-327-4320

John Letherby
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 416-327-4327, or 1-800-268-1154

This news release, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca> under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca.

Disponible en français.