

For Immediate Release
September 13, 2006
2006/nr-102

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INVESTS IN MEDICAL FACILITIES TO ACCOMMODATE NORTHERN MEDICAL STUDENTS

Future Doctors to Get Clinical Education in the North

SUDBURY – The McGuinty government is investing \$5 million to upgrade teaching sites in hospitals across the north to ensure that Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) students get the clinical education they need, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We’re on the side of Ontario’s northern communities, who want and deserve the best possible access to health care services,” said Smitherman. “Through the Northern Ontario School of Medicine’s educational program, students will be providing health services to people in northern hospitals. This is truly great news for the students and residents of the region.”

Health service settings in hospitals across Northern Ontario will act as teaching sites for NOSM students undergoing clinical education. The \$5 million investment will upgrade northern hospital facilities at teaching sites to ensure that students have access to appropriate space, furnishings and equipment such as on-call rooms, offices, lockers, workstations and tele/video conferencing.

The Health Minister was on hand at NOSM’s Laurentian University campus to welcome the 56 students who are beginning their studies in fall 2006. NOSM opened its doors to students for the first time in fall 2005. The school is the first-ever medical school for the North and the first new medical school in Canada in more than 30 years.

“We are very proud to welcome the next class of first year students to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine,” said Smitherman. “This class exemplifies our commitment to bring improved health care access to Ontarians in the North.”

“The interest in the Northern Ontario School of Medicine has been tremendous, and the quality of our incoming students reflects this,” said Dr. Roger Strasser, Founding Dean and Professor, Northern Ontario School of Medicine. “We’re delighted that the government recognizes the unique challenges that come with training students in the North and is making the necessary investments to support our students.”

The government has committed \$95.3 million over three years toward the development of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) with two campuses, one in Sudbury and one in Thunder Bay.

“Our government is committed to developing the resources necessary to benefit residents of Northern

Ontario – and that includes having quality health care professionals,” said Northern Development and Mines Minister Rick Bartolucci. “This investment will give students the tools they need to obtain a quality medical education in the North and will encourage them to remain to work and build their lives here.”

Today’s announcement builds on initiatives already underway in Ontario to improve access to health care professionals, including:

- A 23 per cent increase in medical school enrolment;
- The creation of 150 Family Health Teams, which will improve access to primary care for more than 2.5 million Ontarians in 112 communities;
- More than doubling the number of training and assessment positions for international medical graduates from 90 in 2003 to 200 today;
- Developing a comprehensive health human resources strategy designed to make Ontario the employer- of-choice for health care professionals;
- Opening a new school of pharmacy in Waterloo;
- Reinforcing the new fully inter-professional curriculum at the Michener Institute, funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Today’s announcement is part of the McGuinty government’s plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

-30-

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