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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INVESTING IN BETTER HEALTH CARE FOR ST. THOMAS *Funding Increase of \$4.5 Million Will Ensure There Are No Bed Closures*

ST. THOMAS – The McGuinty government is continuing to invest in better health care for St. Thomas and area residents with a \$4.5 million funding increase to St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We’re on the side of St. Thomas area residents who need quality hospital care,” Smitherman said. “This additional funding will ensure the hospital has the resources it needs to strengthen its programs and services.”

The \$4.5 million in funding is a result of recommendations provided by, Paul Davies, President and CEO of South Bruce Grey Health Centre and appointed coach/advisor of St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital’s financial situation. The funding includes:

- \$3.5 million to enable the hospital to balance its operating budget and avoid bed closures
- \$1 million to support the hospital as it makes its beds more available to acute care patients while working with the Elgin Community Care Access Centre to find care for patients in the right place.

Today’s base funding increase of \$4.5 million, together with a \$1.8 million increase previously announced, brings St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital’s total allocation for 2006/07 to \$50.7 million – a 14-per-cent increase in funding from 2005/06.

"St. Thomas area residents deserve the best possible health care and that includes first-class hospital services," said Steve Peters, the MPP for Elgin-Middlesex-London. "Our government will continue to work with St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital to ensure the best hospital care is available in this area, both now and for the future."

This is just the latest example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of St. Thomas area families when it comes to providing quality health care. Other initiatives include:

- Investing \$862,700 to make home care services available to more residents in the area
- Providing \$202,964 to St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital for needed upgrades to keep the hospital in top condition for patients
- Investing \$149,177 in the hospital to provide area residents with 140 more cataract surgeries, 89 additional hours of CT exams and 25 more cancer surgeries as part of the McGuinty government’s Wait Times Strategy.

Today's initiative 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.

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