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## **ATIKOKAN FAMILY HEALTH TEAM IMPROVES ACCESS TO CARE FOR ATIKOKAN AREA RESIDENTS**

*Adding Health Care Professionals and Expanding Clinic Space to Serve More Residents*

ATIKOKAN – The Atikokan Family Health Team is expanding access to health care by adding more health care professionals and planning to increase its clinic space, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Health care professionals in Family Health Teams work as a team to keep their patients healthy and to improve access to primary health care services in their area,” Smitherman said. “I’m pleased to see the Atikokan Family Health Team expand in size and increase its ability to serve more residents in the Atikokan area.”

Located in the North West LHIN, the Atikokan Family Health Team is one of the 150 Family Health Teams announced by the McGuinty government since April 2005.

The Atikokan Family Health Team, which currently has four physicians serving a population of 5,000, has hired a registered practical nurse and a part-time pharmacist as part of its plan to have six allied health care providers. It’s also working on securing additional clinic space for these additional health care professionals, and expects to have the facility complete and all the providers hired by this summer.

“It’s exciting to be growing and recruiting more health care professionals to better meet the needs of the population we serve,” said Dr. Stephen Arif, Lead Physician. “We look forward to working as a team and hiring our full complement of health care professionals, hopefully by end of summer.”

Family Health Teams are designed around the needs of each community. They include physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, physician specialists, mental health workers and other health care providers, depending on the needs of the local area.

This is just the latest example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families who want improved access to health care professionals. Other initiatives include:

- Increasing medical school enrolment by 23 per cent;
- Creating an additional 22 Community Health Centres and 27 satellites;
- Investing \$89 million to guarantee a full-time job opportunity for up to 4,000 new nursing graduates.

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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