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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS PUBLIC HEALTH IN ALGOMA *\$500,000 Grant To Develop New Integrated Public Health Facility*

SAULT STE MARIE- The McGuinty government is modernizing the public health system in Algoma by providing a \$500,000 planning grant for the proposed new Algoma Public Health building, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We are committed to working with local public health units to help keep Ontarians protected from infectious diseases,” said Smitherman. “This grant will bring the Algoma health unit one step closer to a new facility, so they can better provide important health care services to Algoma residents.”

Today’s funding is in addition to the \$1.1 million increase that the government has provided to Algoma Public Health for mandatory programs. In total, Algoma will receive over \$7 million for mandatory public health programs and other specific grants.

This building is intended to combine five existing facilities onto one site, on the grounds of Sault College. Since 2005, the government has provided about \$939,000 to the District of Algoma Health Unit to support planning for this project. It will provide public health mandatory and related programs as well as mental health and addiction services to strengthen public health programs in the Algoma area.

“We are grateful for the government’s support on this important public health project,” said Dr. Allan Northan, Medical Officer of Health, District of Algoma Health Unit. “This will allow us to enhance disease prevention and health promotion for Algoma residents and beyond.”

“By uploading the costs of public health from 50 per cent to 75 per cent and by providing specific grants for programs such as Smoke Free Ontario our government has provided unprecedented support for the important work that Algoma Public Health does in our community,” said David Oraziotti, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie. “This grant will help fund engineering and architectural work required to build a new facility at Sault College helping Algoma Public Health better serve the health needs of Sault and area residents.”

“This is a clear sign the government is committed to strengthening public health services,” said Mathilde Gravelle Bazinet, Chair of the North East Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). “Planning for this project will help us develop alternative institutional based care which will improve our delivery of public health services.”

This is just one more example of how, working together, Ontarians have achieved results in health care services in Sault Ste Marie. Other initiatives include:

- Supporting a new residential hospice to provide compassionate care to people with life-threatening illnesses, so they can live their final days in comfort and dignity

- Building a new Sault Area Hospital (SAH) that will have 289 beds and will give residents access to a full range of hospital services
- Increasing the province's share of public health costs from 50 per cent to 75 per cent by 2007

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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