

February 5, 2007

IMPROVING ACCESS TO CANCER SERVICES

The McGuinty government has introduced a number of initiatives aimed at improving access to cancer care services in Ontario. These include:

- Funding 375 additional cancer surgeries with \$2.8 million to nine hospitals across Ontario. This builds on the \$26.6-million the provincial government announced last April to add 4,741 additional cancer surgery cases in 2006/07
- Investing \$193.5 million in funding over five years for a provincial colorectal cancer screening program in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario. The program will educate health professionals about appropriate colorectal screening and raise public awareness about Ontario's program and increase the number of colonoscopies performed in Ontario
- Completing 91 per cent of cancer surgery cases within the priority wait time target of 84 days (12 weeks). Since 2004, the government has invested almost \$67 million to support more than 11,200 additional cancer surgeries
- Reducing radiation treatment wait times over the last three years by 33 per cent, from 6.4 weeks to 4.3 weeks
- More than doubling spending for cancer drug treatments covered under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's New Drug Funding Program since 2003-04, from \$62.4 million to \$152.12 million in 2006-07
- Creating new health care provider roles through HealthForceOntario to help increase access to care and reduce cancer wait times. These new roles include clinical specialist radiation therapists to deliver cancer services in collaboration with specialist nurses and physicians on cancer treatment teams; nurse endoscopists to assist with colorectal cancer screenings; surgical first assists to deliver services in collaboration with surgeons and operating room teams, and physician assistants to help the supervising physician deliver medical services
- Investing \$35 million in 2006-07 in the Ontario Breast Screening Program to provide an estimated 320,000 mammograms this year for women aged 50-74; funding will grow to almost \$42 million in 2008-09
- Investing \$44.5 million in new or expanded programs at six regional cancer centres (Mississauga, Oshawa, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton, Sudbury and Thunder Bay). This funding will support over 106,400 new chemotherapy treatments, more than 21,400 radiation therapy treatments, and over 80,700 additional assessments and follow-up services annually
- Announcing support through ReNew Ontario, the government's five-year infrastructure

investment plan, for new cancer centres at four Ontario hospitals (Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket, Sault Area Hospital, Niagara Health System, and Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie)

- Announcing support through ReNew Ontario, for major redevelopments/expansions of cancer centres at The Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre (Queensway Carleton Hospital and The Ottawa Hospital's Civic sites), and the Cancer Centre for Southeastern Ontario (Kingston General Hospital)
- Supporting the replacement and upgrading of radiation equipment (such as linear accelerators and CT simulators) for Integrated Cancer Programs through capital funding of \$97.45 million since 2004-05
- Supporting the ongoing evaluation of Positron Emission Tomography (PET), a non-invasive nuclear medicine imaging tool. Since beginning the PET evaluation initiative, Ontario has laid down one of the largest public PET infrastructures in the country. The province has embarked on five major PET clinical studies and one PET registry study to determine the clinical utility of PET in nine types of cancers for which it may prove helpful for diagnosing cancer patients. As of December 31, 2006, 1,043 patients have been enrolled to the five clinical trials and 514 patients have received a PET scan within the PET Registry Study.

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