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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVES ACCESS TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES *\$8.3 Million Will Bring New Services To Areas Of Need*

TORONTO - The McGuinty government is increasing funding for substance abuse services by \$8.3 million this year, an increase of almost seven per cent, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We want to make it easier for those Ontarians who are struggling with substance abuse to get the help they need,” said Smitherman. “This funding will bolster existing services and help implement new programs, including counseling for people with methamphetamine addiction in the Perth County area.”

The additional \$8.3 million for substance abuse services includes \$2 million to improve methadone maintenance treatment which was announced on July 26th, 2007. The balance of the new funding will help agencies better meet demand for their services in the 14 Local Health Integration Networks and implement new initiatives in geographic areas where services are least available.

“We are delighted the government is strengthening substance abuse programs and services,” said David Kelly, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Programs. “This new funding will increase access so people receive the treatment they need to lead healthy lives.”

This year, the government will invest about \$121 million on substance abuse treatment programs across the province, including withdrawal management, community counselling, and residential treatment and support services.

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

- Increasing funding for mental health services by \$230 million since 2003/04
- Hiring 480 new mental health workers
- \$1 million to recruit more doctors to prescribe methadone and other treatments, expand training and professional supports and develop best practice guidelines

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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