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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVING END-OF-LIFE CARE *Strategy Will Enhance Services In Homes And Hospices*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is improving end-of-life care services for an additional 6,000 Ontarians per year by 2007-08, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“While many people diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses would prefer to live out their days at home, most have no choice but to do so in hospital,” Smitherman said. “We are giving them a choice. We are enhancing end-of-life care at home and funding nursing and personal support services in residential hospices, so that people can live out their lives with as much dignity and comfort as possible.”

The \$115.5 million investment in the End-of-Life Care Strategy will improve care services at home and in the community by:

- Funding Community Care Access Centres to provide more and better end-of-life care, including nursing and personal support services for people in their own homes
- Funding support for nursing and personal support services in residential hospices will be available in over 30 communities by 2007-2008. The government is providing funding for nine hospices in 2005-2006, six more in 2006-2007, and up to 19 the following year. Residential hospices offer care, compassion and dignity to those who are in the last stages of their life while providing needed support to their families
- Strengthening the role of hospice volunteers. Volunteers are trained and supervised by paid staff to provide emotional, social and spiritual support to individuals and their families.

“I commend the government for supporting a more co-ordinated and integrated system of end-of-life care services where people have more informed choices on how they spend their remaining days,” said Melody Miles, Executive Lead for End-of-Life Care for the Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centre. “Providing end-of-life care to Ontarians means active and compassionate care by an interdisciplinary team of providers, with the involvement of the patient’s family and the community.”

“No journey in life is more difficult than the path followed by those with a life-threatening illness,” said Janet Napper, Executive Director, Hospice Association of Ontario. “Today’s announcement will ensure that families continue to receive the social, respite and bereavement support they need during this extremely difficult time in their lives.”

This initiative is part of the McGuinty government’s plan to better integrate local health services and expand community-based care in order to build a health care system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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