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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT CONTINUING TO REDUCE HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

*Additional Cataract Surgeries, Hip and Knee Replacements and MRI Scans Mean
a Better Quality of Life*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is delivering better access to better care for thousands of Ontarians by funding more than 42,000 additional medical procedures as part of its Wait Times Strategy, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today. To date the strategy has resulted in \$240 million being invested in funding new procedures.

“Our government is ensuring that Ontarians get the health care they need sooner,” Smitherman said. “We are continuing to dramatically increase the capacity of our health care system so that more patients are treated and people wait less time for health care services.”

Today’s announcement is supported by a \$39 million investment, and will result in 42,761 more procedures. It is part of the overall wait time funding commitment of \$154 million for 2005-2006 announced last May, which included the largest increase in cataract surgery, hip and knee replacements and MRI exams in more than ten years. These are the allocations for the final six months of the fiscal year:

- 3,387 more hip and knee joint replacements. Since coming to office, the government has funded 6,700 additional procedures – an increase of 28 per cent
- 8,096 more cataract surgeries, for a total increase of 16,000 – or 16 per cent
- 31,278 more MRI exams, for a total increase of 116,745 – or 42 per cent.

Since launching the Wait Times Strategy, the McGuinty government has also funded 4,817 additional cancer surgeries – an increase of 11 per cent, and an additional 14,798 cardiac procedures – an increase of 17 per cent.

“What we are doing is making sure people receive better access to life-changing medical procedures,” said Smitherman. “It means thousands more Ontarians will regain their mobility and independence, others will get their eyesight restored, while still more will receive timely MRI exams so their doctors can make the best possible decisions about treatment.”

The minister also announced an additional \$10 million to meet the increased demand for in-home rehabilitation services, resulting from the government’s investment in more hip and knee total joint replacements.

“With hip and knee joint replacements, funding more procedures is only part of the story,” Smitherman said. “We are also increasing in-home rehabilitation care, so people can make a full and speedy transition to a more active and mobile life.”

Overall, the government’s Wait Time Strategy is focusing on five key areas – cancer surgery, selected cardiac procedures, hip and knee replacements, cataract surgery, and MRI/CT exams.

“These increases are part of a larger plan to shorten wait times across the province through the government’s Wait Time Strategy,” said Dr. Alan Hudson, who is leading the plan’s implementation. “We are building a new system where surgery is co-ordinated across the province to ensure patients get the timely care they need.”

The Wait Times Strategy is part of the McGuinty government’s plan to build a health care system that delivers on three priorities – healthier Ontarians, better access to doctors and nurses and shorter wait times.

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