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## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT CREATES CITIZENS PANEL TO HELP INCREASE ORGAN DONATION**

*Eminent Citizens Panel To Undertake Province-Wide Consultations And Develop Recommendations*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government has created a citizens panel to develop recommendations to increase organ donation in the province, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Organ donation saves hundreds of lives each year across Ontario, yet there are not enough available donors to meet the demand for organ transplants,” Smitherman said. “That’s why we’re creating the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations consisting of highly regarded individuals in the community who will provide our government with their collective wisdom and develop recommendations for a made-in-Ontario Organ Donation Strategy.”

The six members of the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations are:

- Dr. Ted Boadway, former director of health policy at the Ontario Medical Association;
- Alvin Curling, former MPP and Speaker of the Ontario Legislature
- Peter Desbarats, print and television journalist, and previous dean at the University of Western Ontario
- Reverend Dr. Brent Hawkes, human rights activist and pastor of Metropolitan Community Church Toronto
- Gisèle Lalonde, community activist and former mayor of Vanier, who served on the board of directors of the Montfort Hospital and the Montfort Hospital Foundation
- Joan Neiman, former Canadian Senator

Over the next few months, the panel will hold public forums across the province to consult with the public on:

- Ways to increase awareness about the importance of organ donation for all Ontarians
- How to remove barriers to organ donation
- How the government can support and encourage more living organ donations
- The best ways for people to make their donation preference known, registered and recorded.

The panel will report to the government this winter.

“Every single resident of Ontario stands to benefit from this initiative. That’s why it’s important that we consult with Ontarians as we develop recommendations,” said Dr. Ted Boadway, Chair of the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations. “Through these consultations, we hope to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing organ donation, and use that to get to the right solutions.”

Over the years, the number of patients waiting for organ transplantation has consistently exceeded the number of organs available for transplantation.

“Organ and tissue donation can mean the difference between life and death for thousands of individuals,” said Smitherman. “I’m grateful for the keen interest demonstrated from all my colleagues in the Legislature from all sides as we continue to work on this issue. I very much look forward to receiving the recommendations from the panel in a few months from now.”

Other initiatives by the McGuinty government benefiting the health of Ontarians include:

- \$15.5 million in additional funding for 2006-07 over last year’s \$57 million investment to support organ and tissue donation and transplantation across Ontario
- The implementation of the Routine Notification and Request strategy – a strategy requiring Ontario’s major hospitals to report all deaths to the Trillium Gift of Life Network, allowing it to take the necessary steps to determine if a donation is possible
- The introduction of a new policy to fund hospitals for costs associated with screening, assessment and surgery of living liver and kidney donors.

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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