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FORMER SENATOR MICHAEL KIRBY TO REVIEW WAIT TIMES REPORTING *McGuinty Government Responds To Auditor General Concerns*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is asking former Senator Michael Kirby to independently review the Ontario Auditor General’s concerns on how the province measures and reports on its wait times strategy and provide advice for improvement, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Last year, for the first time in Ontario, the McGuinty government started to gather and report on wait times for key health care services,” Smitherman said. “As with any other new initiative, we are constantly looking for ways to improve the system as it evolves.”

The government is asking Kirby to:

- Review the Auditor General’s concerns and the government’s progress made to date to further improve upon the work already underway
- Review the existing methodology of how wait times are calculated and reported on the government’s public website www.ontariowaittimes.com
- Provide additional recommendations that would further enhance public confidence in the accuracy and usability of information provided on the public website.

In October 2005, the province began reporting on its Ontario Wait Times web site, information on wait times for five key health service areas – hip and knee replacements, cataract surgery, cancer surgery, MRI/CT exams and selected cardiac procedures – making Ontario a leader in Canada in providing solid, reliable information on wait times.

Doctors and hospital administrators use the information to help them prioritize their patients and better manage wait times, and patients use it to help guide them on how to get services quicker.

“We welcome any and every suggestion to help make our wait times system efficient, easier to understand by Ontarians and to help our health professionals continue their work in this area,” Smitherman said.

Kirby is expected to report back to the minister early in the new year.

“We’re making good progress, building on the important work of expert panels that have helped us design and capture the data we need on wait times,” Smitherman said.

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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