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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENS DRUG STRATEGY *Changes would ensure the viability of pharmacists and deliver greater transparency*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is proposing changes to its comprehensive drug strategy, including Bill 102, the *Transparent Drug System for Patients Act*, which will strengthen the legislation, ensure the viability of pharmacists, and secure better access to better drugs for patients, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We’re on the side of all Ontarians who want and deserve better health care. That’s why we’re improving access to medications that improve their quality of life,” said Smitherman. “These proposed amendments will help us to achieve fundamental objectives of the legislation, which is to provide Ontarians with better access to the drugs they need and ensure that taxpayers get value for their money.”

The proposed government changes include:

- Narrowing the scope of the legislation to permit pharmacists to receive defined “professional allowances” under a new Code of Conduct, with a cap of 20 per cent of the generic cost in the public system
- Securing volume discount benefits for government on drugs purchased for the public system
- Including the Pharmacy Council and Citizen’s Council in the legislation
- Instituting an automatic second review of decisions by the Committee to Evaluate Drugs or the Executive Officer to not list drugs
- Improving transparency by requiring the Executive Officer to prepare an annual report
- A clause in the legislation that specifically prohibits therapeutic substitution
- Establishing a joint working group with industry and the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care, Research and Innovation, and Economic Development and Trade to promote investment in Ontario.

“The purpose of committee hearings on government bills, such as Bill 102, is to explore whether the legislation can be strengthened or enhanced,” said Smitherman. “We have listened to the concerns of many groups including pharmacists, and the changes we’re proposing address these legitimate concerns.”

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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