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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INCREASING ACCESS TO DOCTORS IN ONTARIO *Budget Increases Medical School Enrolment By 15 Per Cent*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government’s budget improves access to doctors by increasing medical school undergraduate positions in the province by 15 per cent over the next four years, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“This province needs more doctors, and we are making that happen,” Smitherman said. “We’re helping to make sure that Ontario families have access to a doctor of their own, when they need one, close to home.”

“Increasing the capacity of our medical schools is an important component of our government’s historic investment in post-secondary education,” said Mary Anne Chambers, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. “This will mean more doctors, and better access to health care, for people across the province.”

The 15 per cent increase will result in 104 new first-year undergraduate positions being added to Ontario’s medical schools. This increase will be phased in from 2005/2006 to 2008/2009.

This is part of a \$95 million investment over five years to improve programs in the five existing medical schools, better fund the clinical education for health science students, and create a new nursing program in northern Ontario.

This announcement is only one of several initiatives in the budget to improve access to doctors. These include:

Creating the doctors of tomorrow

- \$16.4 million in 2005/2006 to fund new family residency positions and to build two new medical clinics to help accommodate the increase in Family Residency positions. There will be a further investment of \$16.7 million by 2007/2008. This will produce 340 new family doctors, providing care to 400,000 Ontarians by 2008.
- More than doubling the number of training opportunities — from 90 to 200 — for international medical graduates.
- The opening of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in August 2005.

Supporting doctors today

- The new Ontario Medical Association agreement makes Ontario a very attractive place to practise medicine. Investments beginning this year will bring more doctors to communities with physician shortages, support doctors who spend more time treating seniors and people with chronic conditions, reduce wait times for key medical procedures, and support doctors to work as a team and deliver preventative care.

Better access to better care

- The budget will continue to support the creation of 150 Family Health Teams by 2007. In April the government established the first 52 new Family Health Teams, plus three networks of Family Health Teams in Barrie, Peterborough and Hamilton, where doctors work in teams with nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals providing comprehensive care to patients, close to home.

“This is another huge step forward in building a health care system that will help keep Ontarians healthy, gets them good care when they’re sick, and will be there for generations to come,” Smitherman added.

This announcement is part of the government’s plan to improve health care that includes Family Health Teams, increasing the number of doctors and nurses, and investing heavily in community-based health care in order to ease the pressure on hospitals and deliver care where patients need it most - closer to home.

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