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**HEALTH MINISTER WELCOMES NEWS OF RISING NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL
MEDICAL GRADUATES IN ONTARIO**

39 Per Cent Of Medical Licences Issued in 2005 Went To IMGs

TORONTO – Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman today welcomed the news that the number of medical licences issued in 2005 was the highest in 20 years, with the greatest portion of the new licences being given to international medical graduates (IMG).

“This is a tremendous achievement that’s being reported by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario,” Smitherman said. “It clearly shows that the work of our government and the college is paying off as more and more physicians, including foreign-trained doctors, are beginning to practice in this province, increasing access to front-line health care for Ontarians. As we continue to invest record amounts of funding in IMGs, making Ontario a leader across the country in this area, it’s gratifying to see the number of licensed physicians climb to new heights.”

The minister said he was particularly pleased by the fact that:

- The number of medical licences has nearly doubled in the last 10 years, reaching 2,747 in 2005, which is the highest number in the last 20 years
- IMGs received 39 per cent of the licences issued – more than for Ontario graduates and more than double the number for IMGs in comparison to 10 years ago.

The McGuinty government is investing about \$40 million in 2005/06 for IMG training, assessment and support – more than a 50 per cent increase in funding from the previous year. This funding supports more than 300 IMGs in various levels of training and assessment positions.

“Ontario is working harder than ever before to help IMGs get the support they need to practice,” said Anne-Marie Grescenzi, head of IMG Ontario. “We’re committed to continuing to work with stakeholders to develop programs and processes that support the increased participation of IMGs in Ontario’s health care system.”

As of December 2005, IMG programs have resulted in more than 95 IMGs currently providing service in Ontario’s under-serviced communities. Another 192 have signed agreements with the ministry and will begin practising throughout the province over the coming months and years.

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government’s plan to build a health care system that delivers on three priorities - keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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