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**MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT IMPROVING ACCESS TO HOSPITAL
EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Investing \$400,000 In Guelph Pilot Project To Hire Physician Assistant And Nurse Practitioners

GUELPH – The McGuinty government is improving access to hospital emergency services by investing \$400,000 in a pilot project at Guelph General Hospital where a physician assistant and two nurse practitioners will be added to the emergency department staff, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Our government believes that building the capacity of hospitals will help them to respond better to the needs of their emergency department patients,” Smitherman said. “Introducing physician assistants and adding more nurse practitioners to emergency departments will reduce wait times, improve access to services and improve patient care.”

Guelph General Hospital is one of six emergency department pilot projects to be launched in community hospitals across Ontario, including: Brockville General Hospital, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, Quinte Health Care – Trenton site, Sault Area Hospital and Timmins General Hospital. This funding is part of the government’s \$142.4-million Emergency Department Action Plan announced on October 27.

Nurse practitioners work with the emergency department team to provide a range of care – from primary health care to acute care. Nurse practitioners have worked in Ontario’s health system for several years and are a part of the province’s new *HealthForceOntario* health human resources strategy to increase the number of health professionals working in the province to provide high quality and effective health care services for Ontarians.

Physician assistants already play a vital role in the Canadian military and in health care systems around the world. They are an innovative new health care provider role in Ontario and are also part of the *HealthForceOntario* strategy. They will be introduced to emergency departments through the pilot projects where they will assist their on-site supervising physicians in delivering clinical care.

“I’m delighted that Guelph is participating in this innovative pilot project that will help the health care system provide more timely and responsive hospital emergency services for Ontarians,” said Liz Sandals, the MPP for Guelph-Wellington. “We expect that Guelph area residents will greatly benefit from the addition of a physician assistant and two nurse practitioners to the hospital emergency department.”

“Our proposal to participate in this demonstration project was developed in partnership with our nursing leadership, front-line staff and emergency physicians,” said Richard Ernst, President and CEO of Guelph General Hospital. “Our goal is to continue to improve upon patient care and our patient's experience by incorporating nurse practitioner and physician assistant roles into our emergency department. This project has the support of departments across the hospital and will build upon the excellence in teamwork evident in our hospital every day.”

The government's three-point Emergency Department Action Plan builds on recommendations contained in the “*Improving Access to Emergency Care: Addressing System Issues*” report, prepared by a joint committee of the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care which was released on October 2.

Responding to the *Improving Access to Emergency Care* report, the McGuinty government has already:

- Launched a health care infrastructure plan that will add 2,000 new hospital beds, including 400 in 2007.
- Invested nearly \$90 million in a comprehensive critical care strategy that includes the addition of more Intensive Care Unit beds across the province.

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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