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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT STRENGTHENS PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Distributing More Than 15,000 Emergency Infection Control Kits To Front Line Health Care Providers

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is improving its influenza pandemic preparedness by distributing more than 15,000 emergency infection control kits to front line health care providers across the province, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“We’re on the side of Ontario families, who want and deserve the best health care, especially during health emergencies such as a flu pandemic,” Smitherman said. “Our government is taking action by making sure health care providers will be protected and prepared, so that health services will be available to Ontarians in the event of a flu pandemic.”

The emergency infection control kits are being sent out to community-based physicians, Family Health Teams, Community Health Centres and midwives. Each kit contains:

- 200 non-latex gloves, 20 disposable gowns, 500 ear-loop procedure masks, six pairs of reusable eye protectors, six bottles of hand sanitizer, and a surface cleaner
- Information/instruction on personal protection equipment
- Infection control guidelines

The kits will help protect health care workers from droplet-borne illnesses during the first seven to ten days of an emergency response. Additional orders can then be placed for further supplies from planned central stockpiles.

“The government has learned from the SARS outbreak what a challenge it can be to get supplies out to key health care providers who don’t work in hospitals or long-term care homes,” said Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. “Arming these providers with pre-placed emergency kits is a wise move that can help save lives during a major health emergency.”

The government worked with the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario College of Family Physicians and the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee in developing these infection control kits.

“These infection control kits will provide a level of protection for front-line community physicians in the event of a pandemic influenza outbreak,” said Dr. David Bach, President of the Ontario Medical Association. “Ensuring these physicians are better prepared during an outbreak will enable them to continue to care for patients during a time of heightened need.”

This is just the latest example of the McGuinty government’s commitment to protecting Ontarians in

the event of a pandemic. Other initiatives include:

- Stockpiling doses of antivirals - enough to treat 25 per cent of Ontario's population as recommended by the World Health Organization
- Developing the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic which provides directions to governments and health care providers on the most effective ways to respond to a pandemic
- Monitoring flu activity in Ontario, across the country and around the world

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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Media Contacts:

David Spencer
Minister's Office
416-327-4320

John Letherby
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 416-327-4327, or 1-800-268-1154

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