

For Immediate Release

July 17, 2006

2006/nr-082

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES TAKE BIG STEP FORWARD

Community Health Centres Will Increase Access to Primary Care, Strengthen Communities

TORONTO - The McGuinty government's plan to improve access to primary health care and strengthen communities took a big step forward today with the naming of sponsoring organizations to operate and govern four new Community Health Centres (CHCs) and eight new satellite CHCs, Health and Long Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"We're on the side of Ontarians who want the best health care and will benefit from the primary care these CHCs will deliver," said Smitherman. "These sponsoring organizations play a vital role in the success of the CHCs. Having them in place moves us closer to realizing better access to health care services for the people in these communities."

Of the eight satellite CHCs, six are in Toronto. Four of these - Crescent Town, Jamestown, Weston-Mount Dennis and Westminster-Branson -- are in neighbourhoods identified in the United Way of Greater Toronto *Strong Neighbourhoods Report* as priority neighbourhoods. The other two new satellites will be located in Pickering and Thunder Bay. The four new CHC's will be in Brock Township, Bramalea, Port Hope and Vaughan.

"This is very positive news for many Ontario communities," said Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto. "CHCs are a focal point for high impact programs to support individuals and families. We are particularly pleased that the McGuinty government is responding to local needs by placing the Toronto CHCs in priority neighbourhoods identified by the City of Toronto and United Way's *Strong Neighbourhood Strategy*."

"Across Canada, Community Health Centres have been called Medicare's best kept secret. Here in Ontario, the secret is out," said France Gélinas, President of the Association of Ontario Health Centres. "Thanks to McGuinty government and the leadership of George Smitherman, twelve Ontario neighbourhoods will soon enjoy the many value-added benefits Community Health Centres can deliver. This expansion of the Community Health Centre model means healthier people and healthier communities."

CHCs are non-profit organizations made up of teams that include physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, counselors, community workers and dietitians. They provide care for those who have difficulty accessing primary health care due to barriers such as language, culture, physical disabilities, homelessness, poverty or geographic isolation. CHCs also care for those with a higher risk of developing health problems than the general population, and provide programs and services to address factors such as education, employment, income, social support, and housing.

The 12 CHCs now with sponsoring organizations are part of the 39 new CHC sites announced by the McGuinty government last November. At that time, the government announced 22 new full CHCs and 17 new satellite CHCs. These 39 CHCs complement the 10 satellite CHCs announced in 2004/05 and bring the total to 49 new CHCs created by this government. Sponsoring organizations for the remaining 27 new CHCs are expected to be announced in the near future.

This is the latest example of the McGuinty government's commitment to community-based health care solutions. Others include:

- Investing \$117.8 million to improve home care and community support services;
- The creation of 150 Family Health Teams which will improve access to primary care for more than 2.5 million Ontarians in 112 communities;
- Investing \$68.5 million to improve access to community-based mental health services for 22,910 more Ontarians this year.

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.

-30-

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

This news release, along with other media materials, such as matte stories and audio clips, on other subjects, are available on our website at: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca> under the News Media section.

For more information on achievements in health care, visit: www.resultsontario.gov.on.ca.

Disponible en français.