

September 11, 2006

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Ontarians have greater access to health care thanks to the success of a number of innovative McGuinty government initiatives. The following are all strengthening health care in Ontario:

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

The McGuinty government is bringing better health care to 2.5 million Ontarians by creating 150 Family Health Teams.

Family Health Teams across the province are in the process of establishing their teams and have started to recruit doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and other allied health professionals to make comprehensive health care accessible where Ontarians want it - closer to home.

Currently, there are 125 teams in various stages of development providing care to more than 1.4 million Ontarians. Of these, more than 91,000 are new patients who were without a regular family doctor at some point in the last three years. The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care will continue to work with the final 25 teams to ensure operational readiness by Fall 2007.

So far, there are close to 1,300 doctors working in Family Health Teams and 53 of these teams have successfully recruited 152 allied health professionals who are now treating patients and helping them stay healthy.

Each Family Health Team will offer comprehensive primary health care, including the following features:

- An interdisciplinary team of doctors who work with other health care providers, such as nurse practitioners, registered nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, physician specialists, social workers, health educators, mental health workers and others, depending on the needs of the community they serve
- Patient access to their doctor, or another doctor, in the Family Health Team during extended hours
- After hours, patients can call registered nurses through the Telephone Health Advisory Service for advice. If needed, the nurses can also contact on-call doctors to discuss the patient's case
- Promotion of education and disease prevention, encouraging people to take an active role in their own health care to better manage chronic diseases like diabetes and asthma.

- Improved health care coordination by better linking patients to other parts of the health care system, such as hospitals, long-term care homes, public health, mental health and community programs and services. In all cases, a patient's own doctor will receive information on these visits or calls so that the doctor will always be up-to-date on the patient's medical condition.

FAMILY MEDICINE EXPANSION

The McGuinty government is investing \$43 million in the creation of 141 new family medicine training positions. This 70 per cent increase in Ontario's family medicine training programs will lead to 337 additional family doctors by 2008.

NEW NURSING POSITIONS

There have been 4,299 new nursing positions created in Ontario since October 2003. Beginning in 2007, the 4,000 nursing students expected to graduate will be offered a full-time job opportunity in Ontario's health care field.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES

The McGuinty government is committed to increasing access to physicians by providing more opportunities for International Medical Graduates (IMGs). As of 2006, there are 353 IMGs in training in the province of Ontario.

Since 2003, the government has:

- Created a unique IMG Ontario office, which provides a one-stop information service and application process to make accessing assessment and training positions even easier
- Increased the number of postgraduate training and assessment positions available for IMGs from 90 in 2003 to 200 in 2006 and each year moving forward
- Increased funding for the IMG program from \$14 million in 2003 to \$39.5 million in 2006
- For the first time, allowed IMGs to compete for unfilled residency positions in the annual residency position match

DOCTORS IN TRAINING

There are a total of 6,391 people training to become doctors in Ontario, with 800 in first-year medical school; 2,870 in undergraduate programs; and an additional 2,721 in post-graduate training.

HEALTHFORCE ONTARIO STRATEGY

The McGuinty government has launched a new health human resources strategy, *HealthForceOntario*, to ensure that Ontario has the right supply and mix of health care professionals. As part of this strategy the government will:

- Establish new roles in high-need areas
- Develop Ontario's health care workforce

- Better equip Ontario to compete for health care professionals

For more information on the HealthForceOntario Strategy, visit:

www.healthforceontario.ca.

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

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