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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT AND ONTARIO MEDICAL ASSOCIATION TAKING ACTION TO ENSURE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT COVERAGE

Stable and timely patient care a top priority

TORONTO – The McGuinty government and the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) will work together on a plan to ensure reliable coverage of emergency departments across the province, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Emergency rooms are a critical element of our health care system. We need to ensure that patients have access to the quality emergency services they deserve,” said Smitherman. “We will work with the OMA over the coming weeks to make sure the appropriate conditions are in place to not just keep emergency rooms open, but to ensure stable coverage to meet the needs of Ontario patients.”

Smitherman and OMA President Dr. David Bach have asked the Physician Services Committee (PSC) to examine the existing models of care for emergency room physicians and develop new models that will ensure emergency room coverage province-wide. The PSC is expected to conduct its review over the next two weeks and then report back to the government and the OMA.

The PSC is a joint committee of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Medical Association which provides for policy development between the government and the medical profession.

“Doctors in the emergency rooms are feeling the crunch of the physician shortage. We need to be there to support them,” said Dr. Bach. “We’re confident that this review will lead to better working conditions in emergency rooms across the province.”

“There are currently some very successful models of emergency room care, including an innovative model at St. Joseph’s Health Centre in Toronto, which could benefit patients across the province,” said Smitherman. “Right now we have a unique opportunity to bring these best practices to a broader array of hospitals while ensuring they are adaptable to each emergency department’s unique circumstances.”

It was also announced today that emergency room coverage has been confirmed at Grand River Hospital while this review is underway. Grand River Hospital recently faced the prospect of an emergency department closure due to a shortage of available physicians.

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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