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PRINCE EDWARD FAMILY HEALTH TEAM IMPROVES ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR RESIDENTS OF HASTINGS AND PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES

Community Gets Boost As Family Health Team Adds Nurse Practitioners

PICTON – The Ontario government is improving access to health care with the addition of three nurse practitioners to the Prince Edward Family Health Team in Hastings and Prince Edward counties, 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 available,” said Smitherman. “Now that the doors of the Prince Edward Family Health Team have opened, local residents will benefit from better access to care.”

The Prince Edward Family Health Team currently provides health care services to more than 17,000 patients. It is made up of 20 doctors and three nurse practitioners. The first nurse practitioner has already started seeing patients, the second will start later this summer while the third nurse practitioner is expected to begin in the fall. The team will continue to increase access to patient care by adding a social worker, a part-time dietitian, a part-time pharmacist and registered nurses during its first year of operations.

The team has also formed a partnership with the Hastings-Prince Edward Community Care Access Centre (CCAC). The CCAC will assist the Family Health Team in helping to coordinate care for patients who need to use health care system resources outside of the Family Health Team.

“Local residents will see that the Family Health Team model of health care delivery will lead to more comprehensive, accessible care,” said Dr. Cliff Rice, co-Lead Physician, Prince Edward Family Health Team.

“Our primary health care programs will initially focus on health promotion, mental health and addictions, chronic disease management, geriatric care and palliative care,” added Dr. Greg Higgins co-Lead Physician, Prince Edward Family Health Team.

The Prince Edward Family Health Team is one of 150 Family Health Teams announced by the McGuinty government since April 2005. Family Health Teams are designed around the needs of each community. They include doctors who work with other health care providers such as nurse practitioners, registered nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, physician specialists, mental health workers and many others, depending on the needs of the local area.

“Family Health Teams are the next evolution in primary health care services and are changing the way health care is being delivered right across the province,” said Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Ernie Parsons. “They mean a stronger health care system now and for generations to come.”

This is just the latest example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families who want the best access to health care services. Other initiatives include:

- Creating 104 new first-year medical school spaces by 2009/10
- Investing \$75 million over three years to create an additional 22 Community Health Centres and 17 satellites
- Expanding the number of nurse practitioner education seats to 150 this September, one year ahead of schedule.

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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