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## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVING ACCESS TO CANCER-FIGHTING DRUGS**

### *Velcade And Three Other Drugs To Be Funded By The Province*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is improving access to better drug treatment for approximately 1,400 people this year, rising to 2,600 next year, with the funding of four new cancer-fighting drugs, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

“Ontarians engaged in a battle with cancer must have the support of our government,” Smitherman said. “We’re committed to helping them in their struggle by providing access to the medications and treatments that will give them the best possible chance of winning their fight.”

The McGuinty government will provide \$8.2 million this year, increasing to \$15 million the next year, to provide coverage for the following drug treatments:

- Velcade – for the treatment of multiple myeloma, a blood cancer that affects bone marrow, when previous drug therapies have failed
- Taxotere – for early stage breast cancer
- Tomudex – for lung cancer
- Tarceva – for late-stage lung cancer.

The funding of these drugs is based on recommendations of the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee (DQTC), an arm’s length advisory body of medical experts who assess the scientific evidence for drugs.

“This is great news for cancer patients in Ontario,” said Cancer Care Ontario CEO Terry Sullivan. “The government has moved responsibly, based on best evidence, to ensure these drugs were properly reviewed and then made available to patients as quickly as possible.”

This is just the latest example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families concerned about health care. Other initiatives include:

- Funding a post-market study on drug treatments for Fabry Disease that provides treatment to eligible patients
- Establishing an external task force to provide advice to the government on how to improve methadone treatment in the province.

- Passing the Transparent Drug Systems for Patients Act (Bill 102), which is part of the government’s reform of the provincial drug system to ensure improved patient access to drugs and better value for money. The Act is expected to save the government \$277 million dollars per year, money that can be used to fund more drugs like Velcade.

In the case of Velcade, the government was able to provide funding after the drug manufacturer provided the DQTC with the information required to support a positive funding recommendation.

“In the spirit of Bill 102, this is an example of a truly collaborative effort, whereby the manufacturer, CCO, and the Ministry worked together to address some of the initial concerns of the expert committee, which has now resulted in a positive recommendation,” said Smitherman.

Today’s initiative is part of the McGuinty government’s plan for innovation in public health, 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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