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## **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT EXPANDING “TEAM APPROACH” TO EDUCATION FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

### *Ontario Interprofessional Educational Program To Help Health Professionals*

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is investing \$20.4 million to make education and support available to a wider range of health professionals than any other province, Monique Smith, Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman, announced today.

“In the past, government investments in education and support for health care professionals haven’t extended beyond the doctors and nurses who make up half of Ontario’s health workforce,” said Smith. “Now, we’re reaching out to physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and other health care professionals, offering them the support to pursue additional professional education.”

“The McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families who want the best health care,” said Smitherman. “That’s why we are supporting innovative approaches to health education and delivery that emphasize a team approach to patient care, which can lead to better care for Ontarians and greater job satisfaction for health professionals.”

The innovative program supports the following initiatives:

- \$14.4 million to support mentorship and coaching to bring nurses, doctors and allied health professionals together in teams to provide more comprehensive care. Mentorship eligibility is open to nurses, physicians, medical laboratory technologists, medical radiation technologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.
- \$5 million for an innovation fund to support health care professions working together. This program will be developed and administered by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will work with relevant stakeholders to develop innovative programs to assist health care providers in interprofessional/interdisciplinary development activities, skill enhancement and retraining throughout all stages of their careers.
- \$1 million in 2006/07 to extend skill and knowledge development opportunities to allied health professionals providing diagnostic and rehabilitation services. As part of this investment, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has established the Allied Health Education Fund (AHEF). This fund will provide up to \$1,500 per year to allied health professionals for continuing education.

The \$20.4 million investment is part of the ongoing development of the province's innovative *HealthForceOntario Strategy*, designed to ensure the province has the right supply and mix of health care professionals and make the province a more attractive place to practice.

"It makes sense to broaden the scope of health care providers who benefit from education and support investments," said Chris Bentley, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. "Our goal is to continue to make Ontario an attractive place to practice, and to empower health professionals to work together to deliver more comprehensive care."

Today's announcement builds on initiatives already underway in Ontario to improve access to health care professionals, including:

- Creating 150 Family Health Teams, which will improve access to primary health care for more than 2.5 million Ontarians in 112 communities
- More than doubling the number of training and assessment positions for international medical graduates from 90 to 200
- Developing a comprehensive nursing strategy designed to make Ontario the employer of choice for nurses
- Opening a new school of pharmacy in Waterloo
- Reinforcing the new fully inter-professional curriculum at the Michener Institute, funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

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 health care professionals.

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