

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BETTER HEALTH

Shorter Wait Times, More Doctors and Nurses, Promoting Better Health and Preventing Illness

Shortening Wait Times

Ontario's Wait Time Strategy improves access to health care and reduces patient wait times in five areas: cancer surgery, cardiac procedures, cataract surgery, hip and knee replacements, and magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography (MRI/CT) scans. In this Budget, the government is announcing that it plans to add pediatric surgeries to the strategy.

Wait time reductions since 2005 are down in all five areas including:

- Cataract surgeries: wait times down 128 days or 41 per cent
- Knee replacements: wait times down 133 days or 30 per cent
- Cancer surgeries: wait times down 13 days or 16 per cent.

Improving Access to Doctors, Nurses and Other Health Professionals

The government's innovative health-human-resource strategy, HealthForceOntario, helps facilitate the right mix, supply and distribution of human resources across the province. Key components of this strategy include:

- Hiring over 8,000 more nurses by the end of 2007-08 – in this Budget, the government delivers on this commitment through an additional \$43 million, bringing the total to \$89 million, to provide every new Ontario nursing graduate with an opportunity for full-time employment, and an increase of \$14 million for more nurses in long-term care homes; and
- Training more doctors – first-year medical school enrolment is being increased by 23 per cent between 2004-05 and 2009-10.

By the end of 2007-08, 150 Family Health Teams are planned to be fully operational – providing care to more than 2.5 million Ontarians in 112 communities. In addition, by 2007-08 the number of Community Health Centres will rise to 76 from the current 54.

The government is improving access to emergency care by investing an additional \$143 million in 2007-08 through the Emergency Department Action Plan to:

- Improve physician coverage in, and increasing the efficiency of, emergency departments across the province;
- Invest \$35 million in more home-care services and supports to keep people healthy at home; and
- Support the development of 1,750 new long-term care beds and replacement of 662 long-term care beds to help discharge patients from hospitals.

Promoting Better Health and Preventing Illness

The government created the Ministry of Health Promotion, the first in the history of Ontario, to develop programs to promote healthy and active living. With this Budget, the government is continuing to prioritize health promotion by:

- Providing an additional \$2.5 million to the Communities in Action Fund, raising the total to \$7.5 million per year, to encourage Ontarians to participate in sports and other physical activities; and
- Investing \$41 million in community infrastructure and multi-use facilities to promote physical activity, sports and wellness in various communities throughout Ontario.

The government is further investing in public health by:

- Providing approximately \$20 million, growing to approximately \$40 million per year, for colorectal cancer screening for those aged 50 and older – the first program of its kind in Canada;
- Providing funding for the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, an arm's length centre of excellence that would provide support during any future public health emergency;
- Providing \$1.5 million in 2008-09 – growing to \$2.5 million by 2010-11 – to enhance regional capacity of communities to respond to HIV/AIDS; and
- Investing approximately \$7 million to expand addiction treatment programs. The government is also investing \$1 million for a one-year pilot project in Stratford to target producers and traffickers of methamphetamine (crystal meth) and dismantle their labs.

Improving Efficiency and System Integration to Meet Patients' Needs

The Ontario Government is implementing innovative strategies to provide health care services and improve patient care.

With this Budget, the government is providing an additional \$64 million in 2007-08 to promote its comprehensive e-Health strategy including:

- Continued progress towards a secure electronic health record for all Ontarians, giving providers the information they need to care for patients safely, no matter where they treat them; and
- Expanding systems that provide drug and lab information as well as diagnostic images while protecting the security and privacy of patient information.

The government is also taking action to modernize and upgrade Ontario's health care facilities and equipment, and expand hospital capacity. Through ReNew Ontario, the government is investing more than \$5 billion in health care infrastructure by 2010.

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