

IMPROVING CARE FOR ONTARIO'S YOUNGEST PATIENTS*McGuinty Government Improving Access To Care And Reducing Wait Times For Kids***NEWS**September 19, 2008
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Ontario is continuing to improve health care for children and babies with more intensive care unit beds, increased funding for paediatric surgeries and greater support for expectant mothers.

The government is investing \$14.2 million this year to help children across Ontario get the care they need:

- \$7 million for a new Maternal Newborn Access to Care Strategy that includes:
 - Six new neonatal intensive care beds that will provide life-saving care for approximately 129 infants per year.
 - An estimated 22 more intensive care beds over the next two years.
 - Two important screening programs aimed at ensuring the best care for cases of pre-term labour and premature eye disease.
- \$7.2 million to lower wait times for infants and children by funding an additional 4,242 paediatric surgeries at 29 hospitals. This builds on last year's \$5.5 million investment.
- Improving infection control practices in newborn intensive care units and investing in information technology to improve the overall management of the newborn care system over the next two years.

Since April/May 2006 paediatric wait times for all paediatric surgical services have decreased approximately 17 per cent from 273 days to 226 days.

These initiatives are being boosted by the successful recruitment of Dr. Shoo Lee, a world renowned neonatologist who is relocating from Alberta to Toronto. Dr. Shoo Lee becomes Paediatrician-in-Chief at Mount Sinai Hospital and Head, Division of Neonatology at the University of Toronto. He is the founder of the Canadian Neonatal Network, a group of Canadian researchers who collaborate on research issues relating to neonatal care.

QUOTES

"This is all about making sure that parents can rest assured that their kids will get the health care they need more quickly," said David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "Today's investment builds on our commitment to strengthen our health care system by improving access to care and reducing wait times."

"In the 21st century, when talent and innovation are keys to a strong health care system and economy, Ontario is a leader," said John Wilkinson, Minister of Research and Innovation. "Today represents another win for our province. I'm thrilled to welcome one of the world's top neonatal researchers to Ontario, Dr. Shoo Lee. Ontario families will benefit from our province becoming the new home to Dr. Lee's worldwide neonatal research network, in addition to the patient care he will provide at Mount Sinai and Sick kids."

“Ontario is providing tremendous vision and leadership in recognizing the importance of maternal and child health to our society,” said Dr. Shoo Lee, newly-appointed Paediatrician-in-Chief at Mount Sinai Hospital. “I am honoured to participate in this important endeavour and I look forward to helping improve access and quality of care in the province and to establishing Ontario as an international leader in health care, research and training, for the benefit of our future generations.”

“We are excited and exceptionally proud of our innovative strategy to expand high quality care for critically ill newborns,” said Dr. Charlotte Moore, Provincial Lead, Maternal, Child and Youth Health Strategy. “With the tremendous successes we have had with last year’s Paediatric Wait Time Strategy, we are ever the more confident that this new investment in Ontario’s youngest citizen’s will secure future generations with the best possible health outcomes.”

“The dedication and specialized care my two children received in the neonatal unit essentially gave me a thriving family and all of the joy that comes with it,” said Kristen Christie, mother of two former Mount Sinai NICU patients. “Moms and babies sometimes need some extra special help and I feel fortunate to live in a place where the government sees the need for this type of care and invests in our little ones.”

QUICK FACTS

- Ontario has 784 neonatal intensive care beds operating in 45 hospitals: 254 level three and 60 modified level three beds; 401 level two and 69 level two advanced beds.
- Approximately 19 per cent of all women giving birth in Ontario are "high-risk pregnancies", which equals approximately 24,000 women per year.
- Approximately 12 per cent of all babies require an advanced level of care (or are considered "high-risk babies"), which equals approximately 16,200 babies per year.
- The Ontario Newborn Screening Program (ONSP) is Canada’s most comprehensive, with screening for 28 targeted diseases.

LEARN MORE

Find out more about the [Valentine Neonatal Intensive Care Unit](#) at Mount Sinai Hospital

Find out more about [premature babies](#) from Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children

Find out more about reductions in [paediatric wait times](#) in Ontario

Visit the [Children's Info](#) Web portal for all the children and youth programs and services provided by the Government of Ontario

For public inquires call ServiceOntario, INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only)

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