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**Ontario Physiotherapy Association Applauds Ontario
Government's Move to Improve Access to Physiotherapy Services**

(Toronto, March 23, 2005): The Ontario Physiotherapy Association (OPA) is encouraged by Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman's statement earlier today announcing a reconfiguration of OHIP funding so that high-needs patients may obtain the physiotherapy services they require. Effective April 1, 2005 seniors, young people and residents of long-term care homes will have access to OHIP-funded physiotherapy, along with recipients of benefits under the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works and Family Benefits.

"When I met Minister Smitherman last July, he asked for the OPA's help in rebuilding access to publicly funded physiotherapy to fill the gaps that had opened under previous governments," said Christina Boyle, President of the OPA and a registered physiotherapist. "We were pleased to be asked because it's an objective we share. Since then we have worked with the Ministry on the development of funding and service delivery models to improve access to physiotherapy in hospitals, long-term care facilities, in home care and in the community. Today's announcement is an important step in achieving the Minister's and the OPA's objective."

Dorianne Sauvé, Chief Executive Officer of the OPA explained: "Since 1992, governments' attempts at cost cutting resulted in the closure or downsizing of many hospital out-patient rehabilitation clinics and created huge waiting lists for those clinics that remain. Many Community Care Access Centers (CCACs) were forced to impose stringent eligibility criteria and limitations on the number of visits for physiotherapy. Many residents of long-term care homes either went without physiotherapy, or didn't get all the treatment they required. The situation would have been exacerbated with delisting of OHIP Schedule Five on March 31, 2005, if the government hadn't taken action."

"We do have concerns about relying on the existing infrastructure of physiotherapy OHIP clinics to provide these services. These clinics tend to be concentrated in large urban centers, leaving many areas of the province uncovered. We are also concerned that the per visits fees (\$12.20 per treatment and \$24.40 for the first home visit) are below the actual costs of providing physiotherapy services. We also hope that there will be enough money to ensure equity of access to physiotherapy, regardless of where one lives in Ontario and regardless of whether one receives treatment at home, in a clinic or in a long-term care home", said Dorianne Sauvé. "We will continue to work with the Ministry and other stakeholders to improve the funding and service delivery models for OHIP physiotherapy services and to ensure that funding gets to the patients who need it most. We will also continue to work with the Ministry to improve funding for hospital-based physiotherapy and for physiotherapy provided in patients' homes through CCAC's. But the announcement made today is very encouraging. We are pleased that

the government is recognizing the importance of physiotherapy to the health of Ontarians."



The Ontario Physiotherapy Association is a voluntary professional association for physiotherapists who are registered to practise in Ontario and for students studying physiotherapy at any of five Ontario university physiotherapy programs. The Ontario Physiotherapy Association is the Ontario branch of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association. Physiotherapists are regulated by the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* and the *Physiotherapy Act, 1991*. "Physiotherapist" and "physical therapist" are protected titles under the *Physiotherapy Act, 1991* and can be used only by physiotherapists who are registered to practise by the College of Physiotherapists.

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