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3 more vaccines for kids
PROVINCE TO PICK UP \$156M TAB
By BRETT CLARKSON, TORONTO SUN

THE McGUINTY government has added a trio of new vaccines to the routine childhood immunizations, Health Minister George Smitherman announced yesterday. Vaccines for chicken pox, meningococcal meningitis and pneumococcal disease will now be provided free in the following circumstances:

- Chicken pox vaccine for 5-year-old children and high-risk people of all ages who have not yet had the disease.
- Pneumococcal vaccine for all children born on or after Jan. 1, 2004.
- Meningococcal meningitis vaccine for children 12 years of age, youths between 15 and 19, and high-risk people of all ages.

"Our government wants children in Ontario to be the healthiest in all of Canada," Smitherman said in his statement. "Not only will these three vaccines keep countless children healthy, they save young lives."

The government said it will be investing \$156 million over three years to add the new vaccines, and that the plan will see two million Ontario children vaccinated free of charge.