



For Immediate Release

### **Controversial friend of Health Minister Tony Clement Scores Yet Another Windfall from Taxpayers**

Ottawa – The recipient of a \$25,000 sole-sourced contract from Health Minister Tony Clement – who is embroiled in a conflict-of-interest controversy over his stake in a pharmaceutical giant – is the head of a major pharmacists' organization with close ties to the minister, Liberal MP Ruby Dhalla charged today.

"This is absolutely scandalous. Tony Clement refuses to sell his stake in pharmaceutical giant Prudential Chem Inc., and now he's awarding untendered contracts to his close friend who heads a pharmaceutical association," Ms. Dhalla said.

It was reported on the weekend that Mr. Clement gave the 33-day, \$25,000 contract to his long-time friend and aide Gordon Haugh, a high-priced Conservative operative who has been awarded hundreds of thousands of dollars from various public purses while backstopping Mr. Clement.

According to published reports, Mr. Haugh is also general manager of the Canadian International Pharmacists Association (CIPA), a key player in promoting on-line pharmaceutical sales – an issue that has the support of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives.

CIPA is an industry association that represents Canadian pharmacies that sell internationally, including internet pharmacies, which are regulated by Mr. Clement's ministry.

Ms. Dhalla said Mr. Clement's decision to award a sole-sourced contract to a personal friend with a long history of feeding at the public trough is a shameful abuse of his office and taxpayer dollars, made all the more scandalous by Mr. Haugh's industry ties.

"This is what taxpayers have come to expect from this minister. The bad habits he was famous for while in the Ontario legislature have followed him to Ottawa," she said.

Taxpayers will recall Mr. Haugh's notoriously high-priced spell as Mr. Clement's press secretary at the Ontario Ministry of Health while he was laying off nurses, closing hospitals and shafting doctors. At the time, Mr. Clement had given Mr. Haugh an annualized contract of over \$300,000 or \$25,000 a month.

"Mr. Haugh must think he has won the lottery by working for Mr. Clement," said Ms. Dhalla. "His disregard for the taxpayer and his blatant show of patronage and favouritism flies in the face of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's mantra of outlawing influence peddling."

Mr. Haugh and Mr. Clement have a long history together of abusing public coffers. Mr. Haugh was Mr. Clement's director of communications during the minister's failed provincial and federal leadership bids, and as late as the 2006 election served in the same capacity.

Mr. Haugh also served as national tour director to then Canadian Alliance Leader Stockwell Day in the 2000 election – a campaign made famous by Mr. Day's stunning ignorance of geography when he incorrectly said the Niagara River flowed south from where he was standing.

Mr. Haugh was also contracted by the Harris Tories in the run-up to the Walkerton tragedy to run Environment Minister Dan Newman's office, raking in another \$55,000 for two months' work and sticking taxpayers with \$6,400 in expenses, including \$2,783 for meals and six bottles of wine.

Clement, who earned the nickname Two Tier Tony while at Queen's Park for his ringing endorsement of a two-tier health system, is embroiled in controversy for his failure to respond to questions about his 25 per cent stake in pharmaceutical giant Prudential Chem Inc.

Mr. Clement has refused to sell his 25 per cent stake in Prudential Chem Inc., a Toronto-based company that sells pharmaceutically-active ingredients for use in medicines, despite that fact that his ministry regulates the drug approval process.

Opposition MPs said this week Mr. Clement is in a conflict of interest and demanded that he immediately sell his shares.

"Instead of focusing on reducing wait times in this country, establishing a mental health commission, implementing catastrophic drug coverage or ensuring that Aboriginal Canadians and seniors receive the very best in health care, this minister has been looking after his personal investment portfolio," said Ms. Dhalla.

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