



For Immediate Release
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Conservatives Remain Silent on Wait Time Guarantee

OTTAWA – “The minority Conservative Government has shown no leadership on the issue of a national wait time guarantee, and no intention to work with the provinces and territories to help reduce wait times in Canada”, Liberal Health Critic Dr. Ruby Dhalla said today.

“Downloading responsibility to the provinces and territories to achieve a wait times guarantee without additional funding or resources will not fix the issue,” said Ms. Dhalla. “It is a sign that the Conservatives care little about preserving public health care.”

In the last federal election, Stephen Harper promised to meet the benchmarks, established by the provinces and territories under the 10-year Plan to Strengthen Health Care, by December 2006 – he now has only 17 days to fulfill this promise.

In addition, Mr. Harper’s government has indicated that the \$41.3 billion invested by the previous Liberal Government will now have to factor in the costs of implementing his wait times guarantee.

As part of the 10-year Plan, negotiated under the previous Liberal government, provinces and territories established wait time benchmarks for five priority areas: cancer treatment, cardiac care, sight restoration, joint replacements and diagnostic imaging.

Ms. Dhalla also urged Mr. Harper’s government to act on the recommendations to reduce wait times put forward by Dr. Brian Postl, the federal wait times advisor. Health Minister Tony Clement received Dr. Postl’s report in June 2006, but has not acted or followed up.

“Minister Clement needs to step up to the plate, show some leadership, put health care back on the list of priorities, and get down to work. Canadians deserve to see some real action from this government,” said Ms. Dhalla.

Ms. Dhalla made her comments in the lead-up to the federal-provincial-territorial Finance Ministers' Meeting to take place in Vancouver this weekend. Last weekend, provincial and territorial health ministers met with Mr. Clement to request additional funding to implement wait times guarantees for medically necessary health care services. So far, the Conservative government has not indicated that it will respond to their request, nor has it reported any outcomes from the meeting.

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For more information please contact:
Office of Dr. Ruby Dhalla, M.P.
Brampton-Springdale
Tel: 905 874 6868
Email: dhallr@parl.gc.ca