



For Immediate Release
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Clement Missing in Action as Provinces Form Drug Strategy

OTTAWA - Liberal Health Critic Ruby Dhalla today demanded Health Minister Tony Clement explain his failure to meet with his provincial counterparts in Fredericton to discuss the next steps toward a national pharmacare plan.

"Once again, this minister is missing in action," Ms. Dhalla said. "Provincial health ministers are working hard to come up with a plan for a national pharmaceutical strategy that will help all Canadians cope with burdensome drug costs, especially those requiring catastrophic drug coverage. If there's any meeting the federal minister should have attended, it was this one."

The Fredericton meeting was the result of a process started in September 2004, when the previous Liberal government invested \$41 billion over 10 years and agreed to work with the provinces and territories toward a 10-year plan to address Canada's health care challenges. An important part of the Liberal initiative was the creation of a national pharmacare plan.

It is unfortunate that to date Stephen Harper's government has not invested any new money in health care or shown any leadership to build on the progress started by the previous Liberal government.

"Despite my repeated questions, Mr. Clement has remained silent on whether the Conservative government will support a pharmacare program for the most vulnerable Canadians," said Ms. Dhalla. "The Conservative government has been completely silent on the issue of health care."

Ms. Dhalla has also challenged Mr. Clement several times regarding his connections with major pharmaceutical interests - connections Mr. Clement has refused to address.

"Is the fact that the Minister was absent at this important meeting a result of his

privately owned 25 per cent stake in a Toronto-based pharmaceutical company?" said Ms. Dhalla. "I find that curious to say the least."

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