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Conservatives Continue to Fail Canadians With No Wait Times Guarantee

OTTAWA - The minority Conservative government continues to ignore its election promise of a wait times guarantee for Canadians, instead focusing on public relations and piecemeal solutions, Liberal Health Critic Ruby Dhalla said today.

Ms. Dhalla was reacting to the government's announcement of a pilot project to help reduce surgery wait times for children.

"Of course we support steps to potentially save the lives of children, but what about the wait times guarantee that was promised to all Canadians?" said Ms. Dhalla.

The pilot project commits only \$2.6 million, which one Ontario government official has said is not even close to being enough to make a major dent in wait times.

"This government promised as one of its top five priorities to work with the provinces and territories to implement a wait times guarantee, with benchmarks established by the end of last year. Instead, they have downloaded responsibilities to the provinces and territories, without additional funding or resources," said Ms. Dhalla.

"We've had a couple of piecemeal announcements, which serve mostly to make the government appear to be taking action, when what we really need is a comprehensive, national plan with the support of the provinces and territories - like the former Liberal government's \$41.3-billion plan to strengthen health care."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has taken his usual heavy-handed approach by implementing this new pilot project without any consultation with the provinces and territories, which are responsible for delivering health care.

"How can the Prime Minister unilaterally impose a wait times reduction target on the provinces and territories without even asking them if they can meet it? I simply do not understand what Mr. Harper has against consulting with those who are responsible for meeting his objectives," said Ms. Dhalla.

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