

Saskatoon:
Unit 3, 844-51st St. East
Saskatoon, SK S7K 5C7
Tel (306) 975-4725
Toll free (888) 844-8886
Fax (306) 975-4728
vellacott.mp@shawlink.ca



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

Ottawa:
Suite 610, Justice Bldg.
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel (613) 992-1899
Fax (613) 992-3085
Vellacott.M@parl.gc.ca
www.mauricevellacott.ca

Maurice Vellacott, MP
Saskatoon-Wanuskewin

Federal Conservative Government Announces Patient Wait Times Guarantees With All Provinces and Territories

For Immediate Release

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OTTAWA – Prime Minister Stephen Harper today fulfilled the fifth priority of Canada’s Conservative Government by announcing that all ten provinces and three territories have agreed to establish Patient Wait Times Guarantees. Over one billion dollars were contained in Budget 2007 in support of more timely treatment for Canadians.

Maurice Vellacott, Conservative MP for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin, said, “We came into office with five very clear priorities: enhancing accountability; lowering taxes; getting serious about cracking down on crime; providing choice in child care; and working with the provinces and territories to develop Patient Wait Times Guarantees. In just over a year in office, our government has either completely fulfilled or made substantial progress on each of these five priorities.”

Canadians will be guaranteed timely access to health care in at least one of the following priority areas, either cancer care, hip and knee replacement, cardiac care, diagnostic imaging, cataract surgeries or primary care. These areas have been selected by each province and territory based on their priorities, capacity and different starting points. The Conservative Government will provide financial support for these new guarantees through the Patient Wait Times Guarantees Trust, a \$612 million initiative contained in Budget 2007.

The Conservative Government is also investing \$400 million in Canada Health Infoway, the independent, non-profit corporation that is helping transform paper records into bits and bytes so patients and their doctors have access to this essential data whenever and wherever they need it. It is hoped that the digitization of records will have a significant impact on the efficiency of our healthcare system and that, in turn, will help the provinces and territories implement a more comprehensive set of patient wait times guarantees in the future.

Today's announcement complements a number of previously launched pilot projects toward achieving timely access to better care. These include three projects that are designed to test guarantees for prenatal and diabetes care in selected First Nations communities, while a fourth is a national paediatric pilot project to address wait times for children in need of surgery.

– 30 –

For further comment, call (613) 992-1966 or 297-2249