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NEWS RELEASE • COMMUNIQUÉ

Time Running Out to Keep Election Promise, Says Wait Time Alliance

OTTAWA, December 13, 2006 – The Wait Time Alliance (WTA) reminded the federal government today that time is running out for meeting its promise to establish wait-time reduction targets for the five clinical procedures identified as priorities by the provinces.

“The provinces originally promised to set targets by Dec. 31, 2007. The Conservative Government moved the deadline up a year in its election platform and reconfirmed that date in the 2006 Federal Budget,” said Wait Time Alliance Co-Chair Dr. Lorne Bellan. “That leaves the federal government 18 days to keep their promise.”

As the WTA showed in its Interim Report Card released Nov. 29, governments are on the right track when it comes to addressing the long waits facing patients waiting for care. According to the WTA, the federal government must now, more than ever, re-commit to building on gains made so far.

“Governments, all levels of government, are showing promise when it comes to reducing wait times,” added Normand Laberge, Wait Time Alliance Co-Chair. “They must continue meeting their deadlines and stay focused, or risk losing the gains that they have made.”

The WTA wants the federal government to step up in particular by fast-tracking the \$1.25 billion in funding dedicated in 2004 to address health workforce shortages and “nationalizing” successful regional and provincial efforts to reduce wait times.

“Progress is being made but if we don’t develop a national patient care guarantee, backstopped by a publicly-funded safety valve, patients will continue to wait too long for health care services,” said Dr. Colin McMillan, CMA President. “Canadians are depending on their federal government to provide leadership in this area, as they promised they would, just last year.”

The Wait Time Alliance of Canada (WTA) is comprised of the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Association of Radiologists, the Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine, the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncology, the Canadian Cardiovascular Society, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, and the Canadian Orthopaedic Association.

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