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# News Release

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## **Nova Scotia Joins with Canada's New Government to Announce Patient Wait Times Guarantee**

**Monday, March 26, 2007**

**For immediate release**

**HALIFAX, Nova Scotia** – The Honourable Tony Clement, Federal Minister of Health, and the Honourable Chris d'Entremont, Nova Scotia Health Minister, today announced that Nova Scotia has agreed to establish a Patient Wait Times Guarantee in radiation therapy for cancer by 2010, to be supported by \$24.2 million in federal Budget 2007 funding. Nova Scotia will also be eligible to benefit from the \$400 million in new funding for Canada Health Infoway, and the \$30 million for pilot projects as announced in Budget 2007. Nova Scotia is well positioned to receive up to \$48 million over the next three years for the implementation of the Patient Wait Times Guarantees.

"This is a historic moment for healthcare in Canada to have Nova Scotia as the first province to work with Canada's New Government and announce a Patient Wait Times Guarantee," said Minister Clement. "For the first time, Nova Scotians will be guaranteed timely health care access in the area of cancer radiation therapy. We congratulate Nova Scotia for its leadership in taking this step, and guaranteeing patient care."

In addition to cancer radiation therapy, Nova Scotia will also implement two pilot projects. The first will seek ways to improve efficiencies in diagnostic imaging. And the second one will be to develop an electronic patient portal system/centralized wait list for Nova Scotians awaiting hip and knee replacement surgery across the province.

"I'm very proud that Nova Scotia is leading the way," said Nova Scotia Health Minister Chris d'Entremont. "Cancer affects so many Nova Scotians, we want to ensure they get the radiation treatment they need as quickly as possible."

Canada's New Government intends to provide up to \$612 million in a Patient Wait Times Guarantee Trust, \$400 million for health information technology through Infoway, an organization which is making significant progress in working with provinces and territories to implement electronic health records. In addition to these investments, \$30 million over three years will go to provinces and territories for pilot projects related to establishing guarantees.

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"This new guarantee will give patients the care they need, when they need it," said the Honourable Peter MacKay, Regional Minister of Nova Scotia and Minister of Foreign Affairs. "Canadians expect their federal government to work with the provinces in their best interests, and we are proud to be working with Nova Scotia to improve health care for the people of this province."

The federal government believes it is critical Canadians remain confident in the publicly-funded health care system without having to turn to the courts to seek recourse. Quebec has already announced its intention to establish guarantees of access in hip, knee and cataract surgeries.

Canada's New Government has previously announced four pilot projects toward achieving timely access to better care. Three are designed to test guarantees for prenatal and diabetes care in selected First Nations communities, while the fourth is a national paediatric pilot project to address wait times for children in need of surgery.

### ***Background on two Pilot Projects***

#### **Diagnostic Imaging Project**

Diagnostic imaging services are a critical and frequently time-consuming juncture in a patient's care journey. Nova Scotia's "Improving Access to Diagnostic Imaging Services" project will help primary care physicians order the best diagnostic test for their patients, using appropriateness guidelines developed by the Canadian Association of Radiologists. It will also improve efficiencies in diagnostic imaging and support patient choice on where and when they receive care.

#### **Orthopaedic Services Project**

Long waits for orthopaedic surgery are a significant concern for Nova Scotians. The orthopaedic services project will develop an electronic patient portal system supported by a provincial surgical care network and surgical registry. A centralized waiting list across the five surgical centres providing orthopaedic services in the province could allow for the provision of options to patients as to where and when they receive care.

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