



September 18, 2007

Ms. Holly Vengroff  
Director of External Relations  
Canada's Association for the 50 Plus  
1304-27 Queen Street East  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5C 2M6

Dear Ms. Vengroff and Ms. Codispoti:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of Canada's Association for the 50 Plus (CARP) and the Ontario Citizens Cancer Coalition. I appreciate this opportunity to outline the Ontario Liberals' record and future plans regarding funding for access to cancer drugs and diagnostic scans. I would also like to thank you and your members for your tireless work and efforts in championing the issues we all care about.

Since coming to office in 2003, we have worked hard to improve access to cancer services, expand screening programs and implement cancer prevention initiatives in the province. As a result, Ontario is now a leader in Canada when it comes to cancer treatment and prevention.

Working with Ontarians, our Liberal government has redeveloped and is expanding more cancer centres in Ontario than ever before. We have added newer CT scanners, more MRI scanners — and have the most comprehensive PET scanning infrastructure in Canada.

We invested heavily and achieved considerable results in reducing cancer wait times. The wait times for cancer surgeries have gone down by 17 per cent, or 21 days since September 2005, and over 90 per cent of these surgeries are completed within our priority wait time targets. As a result of new investment in our cancer centres, we have reduced wait times for cancer radiation treatment by 31 per cent since September 2003. Wait times for CT scans and MRI scans are down 23 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively.

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We have also taken bold steps to screen for cancer. We all know that screening saves lives. Over the next five years, we will be investing \$193.5 million in Canada's first provincial colorectal cancer screening program. As you know, if detected early, colorectal cancer is 90 per cent curable. In 2006, 7,500 Ontarians were diagnosed with the disease and it accounted for 3,100 deaths.

We also expanded the Ontario Breast Cancer Screening Program by adding 100,000 more scans and 34 new breast cancer screening sites in our province.

We have also made great strides in cancer prevention. We implemented one of the most comprehensive anti-tobacco strategies in North America and, as a result, smoking — the leading cause of lung cancer — is down 20 per cent.

We have also made major progress in improving access to the newest cancer therapies. When we came to office, the funding for new cancer drugs was \$62 million. Today, we spend at least \$176 million.

We are proud to have passed the *Transparent Drug System for Patients Act, 2006*. It is designed to reform our drug programs by making the system more transparent and by providing the government with the ability to ensure lower drug prices. The savings are reinvested in new and more innovative therapies. Since the act came into effect in October 2006, we now provide access to 46 new drugs — including 12 new cancer drugs. We have also created an enhanced Exceptional Access Mechanism, which will enable access to cancer IV drugs on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, we enhanced access to PET scans in the province — with access based on expert advice. We have 10 PET scanners at nine sites across the province — one of the most comprehensive infrastructures in Canada. With PET scans costing approximately \$2,000 per scan and CT scans in the hundreds of dollars, we have taken a responsible approach which ensures that the PET scan will provide benefits to the patient.

We have made PET scans available through the following three streams, depending on the indication of the patient:

**Full Funding** — for indications where there is evidence of clinical benefit to the patient, we provide access to PET scans.

**Clinical Trials** — for indications where we do not have the appropriate level of evidence, we created clinical trials to determine if the PET would be beneficial to patient outcomes.

**PET Access Program** — for indications where there is limited evidence, the patient's physician may request a PET scan through this program. The requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by a panel comprised of an oncologist, a radiologist and a nuclear medicine physician.

The funding for PET scans is open-ended, as in the case of OHIP or our drug budget. Based on our estimates, however, we will be doubling the amount of funding for PET scans this year.

It should be noted that Australia has adopted a similar evaluative approach. Germany, on the other hand, has decided against coverage for ambulatory PET after conducting a rigorous health technology assessment. It is interesting to note that PET experts from the United Kingdom and the Centre for Medicare and Medicaid Services in the United States who visited Ontario commended our Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on its approach toward PET scanning.

While we have made tangible progress in improving access to cancer prevention and treatment, there is much more to do. By working with our partners, I am confident we can make our health system sustainable while providing access to cancer services and innovative therapies that significantly improve the lives of Ontario patients. If Ontario Liberals have the privilege of being re-elected for a second mandate, we will build on our screening and vaccination programs to increase early detection and facilitate the effective treatment of cancer. We will focus on improving breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening rates — and will cover the cost of both the PSA test to detect prostate cancer and the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer.

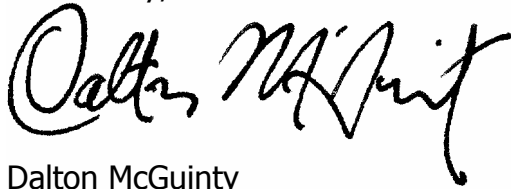
I believe that the progress we have made over the past four years — and the progress we need to make in the years ahead — is at risk in this election. The Conservatives' pledge to eliminate the health premium threatens to take \$3 billion out of Ontario's public health care system. They say they will compensate for this loss by finding "efficiencies." It is not easy to forget what happened the last time Conservatives talked about "efficiencies": they closed hospitals, fired nurses, and failed to tackle the doctor shortage.

You and your members know better than anyone that the number of seniors in our province will double over the next 20 years and that, according to current trends, as many as one in three Ontarians will be diagnosed with cancer. Now is not the time to reduce investments in health care.

We need to keep moving forward, together, so that we can build on the positive results we have achieved so far. And we need your support to do that. Thanks again for this opportunity to respond — and especially for all your efforts on behalf of seniors, and Ontarians living with cancer.

Please accept my best wishes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D" and "M".

Dalton McGuinty  
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party  
Premier