

LONDON HEALTH COALITION

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For Immediate Release

Attn: Assignment Editor

London West Federal Election Candidate Refuses to Debate Health Care: Coalition Releases Letter

London – Conservative federal election candidate in London West, Ed Holder, has refused to attend an all-candidates meeting on health care to be held on April 20 at London's Best Western Lamplighter Inn. Today, the London Health Coalition released a letter from Mr. Holder's communication director stating that Mr. Holder does not see health care as a federal issue and they "are not interested" in seeing Ed Holder debate health care. Green, Liberal and NDP candidates have all agreed to attend.

In a letter of invitation to all candidates, London Health Coalition co-chair Jeff Hanks wrote "healthcare has polled frequently as the main issue in the federal election and our group, the London Health Coalition would like voters to be able to make an informed choice on this issue....Mental health, home care, wait times and the hiring of more doctors and nurses are potential topics as are your thoughts on the future of health care in Canada." Two of three London health coalition co-chairs live in the London West riding, as do a number of the coalition's members.

Ed Holder's campaign replied in writing that they were "puzzled" as to why federal candidates would be asked to debate health care. "I'd think this is more an issue for Deb Matthews and the provincial candidates", concluding: "we're not attracted to see Ed debate on healthcare".

"The Canada Health Act is national law that must be safeguarded if Canadians are to be protected against American-style 2-tier health care," noted Michael McBane, coordinator of the Canadian Health Coalition. "We are concerned that the Conservative candidate in London West – and indeed Stephen Harper – are either ignoring or purposely refusing to commit to uphold Public Medicare for Canadians."

"The next federal government will negotiate the national Health Accord - the framework for funding and providing health care services across the country", said Jeff Hanks, co-chair of the London Health Coalition. "This is a question of democracy. It is not acceptable for Ed Holder to refuse to debate the important health care issues facing our riding and our country in an all-candidates meeting."

Federal Government Responsibilities for Health Care include:

- Upholding and enforcing the Canada Health Act, the law that protects patients from user fees and extra billing across Canada. It sets the conditions for Public Medicare as a national program.
- The next federal government will negotiate the 2014 Health Accord, including the funding arrangements for health care for the country. Negotiations with the provinces start in earnest next year.
- Pricing of pharmaceuticals, including cost control and potential bulk purchasing of drugs as well as a potential national drug program.
- The federal government is also the direct provider of the 5th largest health system in the world – health care for First Nations in Canada.
- CETA: the government is negotiating a free trade agreement with Europe that threatens privatization of Public Medicare.

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