



For immediate release
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Prolonged cancer testing crisis puts the lives of more Canadians at risk

OTTAWA - The Harper government's admission that their cancer testing crisis will last until at least the end of 2009 has Liberal MPs demanding actions that put the health of Canadians first.

"The Harper government has abdicated their responsibility for safeguarding the lives of Canadians," said Geoff Regan, Liberal Natural Resources Critic. "The Prime Minister's brazen declaration that Canada is out of the medical isotope business and failure to plan past Chalk River has left cancer and cardiac patients in the lurch."

Conservative Natural Resources Minister Lisa Raitt refused to acknowledge the possibility that the National Research Reactor at Chalk River, Ontario could be out of service beyond the original three-month shutdown. Doctors are running out of options as the prolonged shortage reaches an unprecedented two-thirds shortage of world capacity, with Holland preparing a planned shutdown of their own medical isotope reactor in the coming weeks.

"We're sick of getting the run-around from this government while cancer and cardiac patients compromised by isotope shortages get sicker," said Liberal Health Critic Dr. Carolyn Bennett. "No more obfuscation about outdated medical techniques. No more pretending other countries are sending more isotopes our way when they aren't. No more passing the problem off to the provinces. We are asking for federal leadership and demand to see their action plan now."

Instead of acting to protect the health of Canadians, the government's only significant action to date has been to alienate strapped international suppliers by announcing the sale of AECL and exit from the isotope business, after shutting down the MAPLE isotope project at an advanced stage of completion.

"The Conservatives made a mess of plan A without having a plan B," said Liberal Environment and Energy Critic David McGuinty. "Why won't they explore the viability of the MAPLE reactors? Have they convinced the Dutch to delay the shutdown of the Petten reactor? Have they signed new supply agreements to get

patients the isotopes they need? We demand action from this government, not just more bad news."



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