



NDP leader commits to protecting universal public health care during HEU telephone town hall

“Medicare came in through the New Democratic Party. It’s part of our DNA. And we’re going to defend it every step of the way,” pledged NDP leader of the opposition, Tom Mulcair, in his conversation with the 6,000 HEU members who joined the union’s special telephone town hall on July 21.

Hosted by HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside, the town hall provided an opportunity for members to speak directly to Mulcair about the issues that matter most to them in October’s federal election.

“The next election is just 90 days away,” Mulcair reminded participants prior to fielding members’ questions which ranged from seniors’ care, mental health and temporary foreign workers to supports for children and adults with special needs, low-income housing, education, child care and more.

At the outset of his remarks, Mulcair criticized both liberal and conservative federal governments for cutting back Ottawa’s support for Canada’s universal public health care system, saying those cuts are putting more pressure on the provinces to open up private, for-profit health services.

“But then, that’s the Conservative’s goal. The wealthy should have one service level and everyone else another,” he said.

On other issues, Mulcair committed to working cooperatively with the provinces in such areas as education, housing, and transportation, which fall outside federal jurisdiction. And he criticized Stephen Harper for refusing to attend a single meeting of the provincial premiers during his tenure as Prime Minister of Canada.

Federal NDP health critic Murray Rankin, Member of Parliament for Victoria, was also on the line. In response to one member’s concerns about retirement, he said the NDP would reverse Harper’s decision to raise eligibility for old age security from 65 years of age to 67 – making people work an extra two years – and increase Canada Pension Plan rates.

In his final remarks, Mulcair told town hall participants an NDP government would make health care a top priority. Rankin echoed those remarks and thanked the union and HEU members for all their efforts to preserve public health care and improve it for all Canadians.

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