

**For Immediate Release**  
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**NDP CALLS FOR EXPANDED MRI FUNDING TO EASE BACKLOGS AND PATIENT SUFFERING**

**VICTORIA** – As more and more patients come forward with stories about paying to access diagnostic care in public facilities, it's time for the B.C. Liberals to immediately inject more funding to reduce unacceptable backlogs and help those suffering on long wait lists, NDP Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

"People are suffering on wait lists while private operators benefit because this government has failed to adequately fund MRI facilities," said Dix. "As a result, patients are saddled with unacceptable waits while public facilities sit idle or are rented out for private interests to use. This illegal queue jumping must stop and the best way to do that is to provide the resources the public system needs."

Since the first example came to light last week at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, several more patients have come forward outlining how they paid a private operator for diagnostic services at the public facility. The total number of patients is not known but many of the procedures occurred during regular operating hours.

The Minister of Health, George Abbott, has admitted that this activity is a clear violation of the *Canada Health Act* and the B.C.'s *Medicare Protection Act*. However, he claims that he and his government were unaware of the illegal activity.

"The Minister's ignorance is unacceptable," said Dix. "For five years this government has encouraged private clinics to take a bigger role. The government has been tacitly approving queue jumping by private interests at the expense of patients suffering on wait lists."

Dix also questioned the validity of the publicly available wait list information for diagnostic services. As more patients come forward with stories about the months they have to wait for an MRI, it's clear that the public information is misleading.

"We've heard from people all over the province who say they've been waiting months for an MRI," said Dix. "However, public information on some health authority websites claims the wait time is much shorter. On top of that, the province actually has no clue what real diagnostic wait times are across B.C. The government needs to complete a full audit of their wait list and wait time data for diagnostic services. The public has a right to know where the system stands and patients deserve more accurate information."

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