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PREMIER MISREPRESENTS DATA TO SPIN CONVERSATION ON HEALTH

VICTORIA – A new report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information shows that Premier Gordon Campbell is misrepresenting the data on health care spending for his own political purposes in an effort to claim that our public health care system is not sustainable, NDP Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

“Premier Campbell is attempting to scare people over to his point of view,” said Dix. “He wants cuts in services to patients and more privatization of health care. The CIHI report shows that he has launched his Conversation on Health under false pretenses.”

Statistics released today by the Canadian Institute for Health Information show that public health care spending is not wildly out of control as the Premier would like British Columbians to believe. The report shows that health expenditure as a proportion of total government expenditures in B.C. declined in recent years. In addition, B.C.’s health expenditure as a percentage of G.D.P. shows spending has been steady for over a decade and has actually declined since 2000.

On September 28 2006, Gordon Campbell told British Columbians that health spending could consume 71 percent of the provincial budget by 2017. Finance Minister Carole Taylor used the same information in her quarterly report on September 15 2006. Both Premier Campbell and Minister Taylor used the statistic to challenge the public system’s sustainability.

“The Premier is trying to manipulate his own Conversation on Health in a particularly cynical way,” said Dix. “If the Premier wants more private health care and less public services, he should tell people the truth. That way British Columbians can have a real dialogue about the future of our public system.

“I find the government’s statistical spin incredibly misleading and disingenuous,” said Dix. “It’s clear that there are real challenges in our health care system as the CIHI report indicates. For example, there has been an extraordinary increase in drug costs. However, B.C. will not make any progress on any of these issues if the Premier refuses to deal with the facts.”