

For Immediate Release
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HALLWAY MEDICINE CRISIS SPREADS TO ROYAL COLUMBIAN

VICTORIA – As the B.C. Liberals continue to dither on the overcrowding crisis in emergency rooms, hallway medicine is now the standard of care at another hospital, NDP Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

“Doctors at Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster are sounding the alarm again,” said Dix. “Patients are facing long delays on stretchers in hallways because of a bed shortage created by this B.C. Liberal government. Health Minister George Abbott needs to stop paying lip service to the problem and take real action.”

Concerns expressed today by Royal Columbian ER physician Dr. Joseph Haegert on a Vancouver radio station are the latest in a long list of warnings over the past three years. Dr. Haegert said that the ER is as crowded as ever and the government’s one-time funding initiative has not made up for the shortage of beds.

Since 2001, the B.C. Liberals closed one in five acute care beds in British Columbia’s health care system. They downgraded many others and closed down long term care facilities across the province. In New Westminster, the government closed and tore down St. Mary’s Hospital putting added stress on Royal Columbian. As a result, the region and the province as a whole face a critical shortage of admitting beds.

“The bed shortage this government created is to blame for the hallway medicine we see today across the province,” said Dix. “We’re only in the beginning of November and already ERs are facing serious overcrowding. The winter months ahead are the busiest for our hospitals and this government still does not have a plan to help patients.

“This is about providing basic care to patients,” said Dix. “And despite numerous warnings, Mr. Abbott continues to deny the extent of the problem. He even tried to defend hallway medicine as a best practice. The fact of the matter is that the B.C. Liberals have failed patients. They need to stop relying on small, one-time handouts and actually reopen the beds they closed.”

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