

For Immediate Release
March 12, 2007

**MINISTER OF HEALTH JUST NOT PAYING ATTENTION
CRISIS IN KELOWNA GETTING WORSE**

VICTORIA – The Minister of Health is ignoring the fact that the emergency room at Kelowna General Hospital has become a chronically over-jammed acute care ward because admitted patients have nowhere to go but the hallways and closets, Opposition Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

“Because the government refuses to address the crisis at Kelowna General Hospital, the emergency room has turned into waiting area not only for emergency patients waiting to see a doctor, but also those admitted patients waiting to be sent to the appropriate care ward,” said Dix, the MLA for Vancouver – Kingsway.

Dix pointed to a day last month where there were 35 admitted patients waiting in the ER, well over the 24-stretcher capacity. “This doesn’t even account for the patients getting emergency treatment and those waiting to be seen by doctors.

“Last Wednesday there were 17 admitted patients in the ER, and doctors tell me that there are regularly 15-20 admitted patients at any given time waiting to be moved to an acute care ward,” said Dix. “In other words, the emergency room regularly serves as an over-jammed hospital ward before any ER patients are even considered.

“This is more than overcrowding, this is mismanagement by the government,” said Dix. “We hear of Code Purples and Overcapacity Alerts every week, and yet the Minister consistently ignores the missing piece to ease congestion at Kelowna General – more acute care beds.

“It is amazing that the Premier can come to Kelowna and make an announcement for upgrades to the hospital that does not include increasing the number of acute care beds,” said Dix. “The B.C. Liberal government just isn’t paying attention.”

- 30 -