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DIX CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO END COPEMAN'S EXTRA BILLING

VICTORIA – The B.C. Liberal government has failed to bring Vancouver's private Copeman Healthcare Centre into line with the Canada Health Act and the B.C. Medicare Protection Act even though the controversial clinic has defied the government for more than a year, New Democrat Health Critic Adrian Dix charged today.

"The Copeman clinic was told by the health ministry in February last year that it must end its controversial annual fees for access to the clinic's services or remove its doctors from the Medical Services Plan," said Dix, the MLA for Vancouver – Kingsway. "The Copeman clinic is defying the government and the law by charging fees to its clients to access medically insured services, and 13 months later, the government has done nothing to stop it."

Dix made public two letters to Copeman from Craig Knight, the Assistant Deputy Health Minister for Strategic Policy dated Sept. 8, 2005 and Feb. 1, 2006, calling on Copeman to bring its practices into line with the Canada Health Act and the B.C. Medicare Protection Act. The letters were obtained by the New Democrat caucus through a freedom of information request.

"The Copeman clinic charges patients thousands of dollars a year to access services that are covered under the Medical Services Plan. More than a year ago, the government told Copeman to stop charging the fees or pull its doctors out of the Medical Services Plan. Copeman has done neither, while the B.C. Liberal government and the Medical Services Commission stand idly by," Dix said.

"It's time for George Abbott to prove that he believes in upholding the law, even when it goes against the wishes of private health providers who are the friends of the B.C. Liberals," Dix said.

The Copeman clinic charges members of its "Elite Program" a fee of \$3,500 for the first year of enrolment and \$2,300 for subsequent years of enrolment.

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