

For Immediate Release
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**AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT SHOWS B.C. LIBERALS FAIL TO
PROTECT PATIENTS FROM INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

VICTORIA – A new report shows that the B.C. Liberal government has failed to take adequate action to protect patients from infectious diseases despite having been warned of the problem in 2004, New Democrat Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

Acting Auditor General Arn Van Iersel today released a seven-volume report, Infection Control: Essential for a Healthy British Columbia, which concludes that B.C.'s health authorities lack an effective, integrated system for the prevention, surveillance and control of infectious diseases.

"This report is very disturbing," said Dix, the MLA for Vancouver-Kingsway. "Patients are needlessly being put at risk, and the B.C. Liberal government has done little to address the problem despite having been warned of this very issue more than two years ago."

Following a series of infections in the maternity ward at Surrey Memorial Hospital in 2004, the provincial government commissioned the Cochrane Report, after which then-Minister of Health Shirley Bond pledged that her government would quickly bring in improved safeguards to protect patients.

"The former Minister of Health made specific assurances, but we are now learning that her government has not kept those promises. This is yet another broken promise by the Campbell Liberals," said Dix. "It amazes me that this B.C. Liberal government seems to have ignored such a serious problem."

"And instead of dealing with this pressing challenge, the B.C. Liberal government has been bringing in policies that could actually make the problem worse. Hospitals are faced with high staff turnover, and there are inadequate training opportunities for the health care providers who work so hard every day in our hospitals and care facilities," continued Dix. "There is poor accountability in our health care system, and it is time for the Minister of Health to take responsibility for his portfolio and start acting in the best interests of British Columbians."

Dix noted that managing infectious diseases is increasingly important given the growing prevalence of superbugs in hospitals and care facilities.

"The concerns expressed in today's report reinforce the importance of taking action now," said Dix.

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