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CAMPBELL GOVERNMENT TO BLAME FOR LOOMING SHORTAGE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

VANCOUVER - Documents obtained by the NDP from the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority point to a looming shortfall in the number of health professionals over the next 10 years, Opposition Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

"These documents show that Gordon Campbell isn't taking the steps necessary to protect public health care into the future," said Dix, the MLA for Vancouver-Kingsway. "The looming shortage of health professionals will have a dramatic effect on patient care, and the Premier is squarely to blame."

Dix pointed to planning documents from the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority that show by 2015 the health authority will have:

- 85 per cent fewer medical laboratory technologists than it needs;
- 72 per cent fewer medical diagnostic sonographers than it needs;
- 75 per cent fewer bedside care aides than it needs;
- 39 per cent fewer RNs than it needs; and
- 34 per cent fewer pharmacists than it needs.

"Within a decade the health authority will only have 25 per cent of needed care aids. The deep cuts the B.C. Liberals made to the working conditions and wages of these professionals is clearly taking its toll," said Dix. "The Premier and the Health Minister have consistently undervalued health professionals and now we see the result – severe shortages on the horizon."

Dix also pointed to government efforts to privatise services as another reason staffing resources are being drained from the public health care system. "Because of the government's short-sighted push to privatize these kind of services, our public health care system will be in dire need in a decade for trained professional.

"This is not the time for brinkmanship by the Health Minister. It is time for a renewed commitment to public health care and the professionals that make the system work for patients," said Dix.

"The documents from Coastal Health are only the tip of the iceberg in understanding the looming shortage. The Health Minister and his government know about this shortage – the question is whether they care enough to act. Or is the Minister willing to allow our public health care system to deteriorate further?"

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