

**For Immediate Release**  
**April 24, 2007**

**AMBULANCE CRISIS HIGHLIGHTS GOVERNMENT FAILURES**

**VICTORIA** – The current crisis at the Kamloops ambulance dispatch centre highlights the government’s failure to invest in ambulance services for rural British Columbians, New Democrat MLAs Adrian Dix and Charlie Wyse said today.

“The Premier and the Health Minister have ignored the challenges facing ambulance services in the province, and particularly the Interior and North, for too long,” said Wyse, the MLA for Cariboo - South. “Now an issue as simple as a backed up toilet has almost completely shut down a dispatch center covering three quarters of B.C.”

Wyse said that the sewage problem and chemical spill have forced the Kamloops dispatch centre to relocate. Because there is no backup system in place dispatch services are being run on cell phones leaving the system with no way to prioritise calls and subject to ‘black out’ areas in the region where cell phone coverage is unavailable.

“The current crisis at the Kamloops ambulance dispatch centre is wreaking havoc on emergency services for the regions north of Lytton,” said Wyse. “This is a massive part of the province which is now being negatively impacted because of the Campbell government’s failure to invest in adequate back-up services.”

Opposition Health Critic Adrian Dix said the Health Minister cannot continue to dismiss the problems facing emergency and ambulance services in the province.

“Ambulance services in rural communities are facing prolonged closure and now we see a major dispatch centre struggle without an adequate back-up system needed in case of emergencies – emergencies like we are seeing today in Kamloops,” said Dix. “At the end of the day it is the people of this province that are affected by the lack of government investment. The patients and their families who rely on emergency services pay the price when a government just doesn’t care.”

Dix and Wyse have called on the Minister of Health to immediately establish an emergency back-up system for the three ambulance dispatch centres in the province.