

For Immediate Release
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HEALTH MINISTER IGNORING PLANNING DOCUMENT

VICTORIA— An internal health care planning document obtained by the Opposition shows that Health Minister George Abbott is ignoring the Fraser Health Authority's own plans to relieve critical bed shortages in the Fraser Valley, NDP Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

"This long awaited report shows us that while a health care crisis looms before us, the B.C. Liberal government is spending more and more time and money planning instead of getting to work ensuring the Fraser Health Authority has the beds it needs to meet growing demand," said Dix.

"This report was ready for implementation in 2005, but the Campbell government is still planning when we need hundreds of beds," said Dix.

Dix said that the Fraser Health Authority Acute Care Capacity Initiative: Preliminary Beds Estimates Report is very clear. "There is a real need for more acute care beds – you don't need to be a statistician to understand that. The real question is why is the Minister of Health wasting time and ignoring his own planning process?"

"The Fraser Valley is the fastest growing region in the province and the Health Minister and his government are well aware of the demands facing it," said Dix. "There can be no more excuses from Minister Abbott – his foot dragging is hurting the patients that rely on our public hospitals. Surgeries are being cancelled because there is no recovery bed and ER's are clogged because there is no bed to admit patients to – these scenarios will only get worse if the Minister continues to ignore what his own planning documents tell him.

"This report sheds light on the sheer incompetence of the Health Minister and his decision to let the Health Authority struggle under a government-imposed deficit," said Dix, the MLA for Vancouver-Kingsway.

"It's no surprise that Keith Purchase resigned in frustration – this government and this Health Minister aren't interested in meeting the needs of patients in the Fraser Valley," said Dix.

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