

**For Immediate Release**  
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**LETTER SHOWS HEALTH MINISTER TRIED TO SLASH  
CAPITAL FUNDING FOR HEALTH AUTHORITIES**

**VANCOUVER** – A letter from the former heads of the Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health authorities to the Health Minister demonstrates growing government incompetence over funding vital health capital projects, New Democrat Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

“It is remarkable to discover that despite being fully aware of the demands on the two health authorities in the Lower Mainland, the Premier and the Health Minister tried to cut funding to badly needed capital projects – funding that would ensure new equipment, resources, beds and buildings were in place to ease the growing strain on the region,” said Dix. “The Campbell government tried to cut funding and then tried to hide it from the public.”

The Jan. 12, 2007 letter, signed by former Fraser Health chair Keith Purchase and former Vancouver Coastal Health chair Trevor Johnstone, protests the loss of multi-year funding from the government for capital projects, resulting in cuts to Fraser Health of \$43 million and Vancouver Coastal Health of \$26 million. The letter was heavily severed before being released under a Freedom of Information request.

“It is almost as if the Campbell government was actively trying to undermine the health care system – consciously adding to its burden, instead of working to relieve it,” said Dix.

The letter warns that: “Without access to capital, some important changes, big and small, will not happen, and this ultimately places greater strain on the system.” It goes on to say: “Minister, we feel trapped. We implemented Government policy according to the rules and now we find ourselves penalized.”

In late January, 2007, George Abbott fired Johnstone as the chair of Vancouver Coastal Health for speaking out on funding issues. Purchase resigned in protest shortly afterwards.

“What is clear from this letter is that the Campbell government was trying to cut the budget of these health authorities and would not tell truth about what they were doing,” said Dix. “Only after the Chairs spoke out in public protest has the money restored.”

Dix pointed to the recently leaked Fraser Health Service Plan for 2007/08 as further evidence of the funding crisis the government has saddled the health authority with. “We have learned of the real challenges facing Fraser Health. Now the Minister needs to come clean about Vancouver Coastal Health and release that Service Plan immediately.”

- 30 -