

For Immediate Release
July 23, 2007

VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH FUNDING CRUNCH TAKING ITS TOLL ON PROVIDENCE HEALTH

VANCOUVER – Government under-funding and deficits at Vancouver Coastal Health Authority have left Providence Health struggling with reduced services for patients, New Democrat Health Critic Adrian Dix said today.

“According to internal information from Providence Health Care, an operating room at Mount St. Joseph’s has been closed for the last five months, pushing patients further back on wait lists. And now the orthopedic surgeons at St. Paul’s’ Hospital are speaking out in protest of growing wait lists,” said Dix. “Vancouver Coastal Health is heading towards disaster because of Campbell government mismanagement.”

Vancouver Coastal Health had a deficit last year of \$44 million, \$12 million of which was from Providence Health. This year Vancouver Coastal is facing another deficit projected at \$36 million. “We have known about the funding crunch for some time and now we are seeing the impact of government funding shortfalls on patients.”

Providence Health closed an operating room at Mount St. Joseph’s Hospital from March to July of 2007. As a result OR time within Providence Health was reduced by eight per cent for that time period, leaving surgeons less operating time than required to meet their wait time targets.

As well, eight orthopedic surgeons at St Paul’s Hospital are currently engaged in job action to demand more resources for their department to address growing wait times.

Dix said that in January 2007, officials with Vancouver Coastal Health told staff that cutbacks were needed to address the budget shortfall, including the closure of operating rooms and the practice of leaving open operating times vacant.

“Waitlists for surgical procedures are already too long,” said Dix. “Taking capacity out of the system to solve a government-imposed funding crunch makes no sense. It only serves to punish patients for the failures of the Campbell government.”

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