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MRI CAPACITY IN B.C. NOT FULLY USED **B.C. Residents Wait Longer Than National Average**

VICTORIA—A Canadian Medical Association study shows B.C. patients wait far longer for essential diagnostics than the national average, says Adrian Dix, Opposition Health Critic.

“This is easily fixed. We know the Campbell Liberals cap funding for MRI procedures so there is plenty of unused MRI capacity that sits idle,” said Dix. “If we better used that capacity, we could get the wait lists down.”

The maximum recommended treatment time is 30 days. Patients may need an MRI to determine the extent of damage and if surgery may be required. Waiting can lead to irreparable damage.

“Patients in B.C. wait in pain an average of 84 days to access an MRI – more than twice as long as Ontario and a month longer than Alberta,” said Dix. “The sad part is that this study doesn’t even count the time it takes to see a specialist so wait times are even higher.”

Lower Mainland: Of the three MRIs at St. Paul’s, two run seven days a week but one stops at 5 p.m., a second closes at 10 p.m., while the third isn’t used at all. Vancouver General’s two scanners run just five days a week, stopping at 10 p.m. The one scanner at Lion’s Gate Hospital works five days per week but three of those days operations stop at 5 p.m. and the other two days close at 7 p.m. UBC has an MRI currently used for research purposes only.

Victoria: There are two scanners at Victoria General and one at Royal Jubilee hospitals. All three run from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday. One of the three also runs Monday to Thursday from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. and on weekends from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“There should be no reason B.C. is doing worse than almost every other province,” said Dix. “We can solve this problem if the Campbell Liberals invested in public health care.”

The report, “*The Economic Costs of Wait Times in Canada*”, reveals the length of time patients wait for care in just four areas - joint replacement, sight restoration, cardiac bypass surgery and MRI scans – cost Canada \$14.8 billion last year and lowered government revenues by \$4.4 billion during the same period.

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