

For Immediate Release
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NEW DEMOCRATS PRESS FOR FREE PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING

VICTORIA—New Democrats will table legislation this spring to give B.C. men access to free screening that can indicate early signs of prostate cancer, says Opposition Health Critic Adrian Dix.

B.C. remains one of only four jurisdictions left in Canada that does not cover prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening. Six provinces and three territories cover the screening.

“PSA testing is one tool that can help detect prostate cancer earlier,” said Dix. “During the next sitting of the House I will introduce legislation to make this screening available to men in B.C.

“This is a significant public health issue for men and their families,” said Dix. “Prostate cancer is the most common cancer among Canadian men and is the second leading cause of death by cancer for men.”

Dix’s comments followed a B.C. Human Rights Tribunal decision last week that ruled it is not discriminatory to have men pay for prostate cancer screening. Women already receive free mammograms and Pap smears as routine health screens.

“Discrimination is not the issue here. These tests are all important health care tools,” said Dix. “It’s difficult enough to get most men in for a physical exam without adding road blocks such as added costs – covering the test is the right thing to do.”

B.C. Cancer Agency statistics indicate PSA testing can detect cancer about five and a half years earlier than it can be detected clinically. Elevated levels of PSA, a protein produced by the prostate gland, can be an indicator of cancer. While PSA levels alone are not enough to confirm cancer, screening can be an indicator for physicians to check further for signs of prostate cancer.

In Canada, the following jurisdictions now cover PSA testing as a screening tool: Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, North West Territories, Yukon, Nunavut.