

For Immediate Release
Feb. 22, 2008

HEALTH AUTHORITY FUNDING SHOWS CAMPBELL LIBERALS' VINDICTIVE NATURE
Expect Further Cuts to Care, Says Dix

VANCOUVER—Yesterday's health authority funding announcement by the Campbell Liberals hurts patients and will lead to further cuts to care, says Adrian Dix, NDP Opposition Health Critic.

Dix pointed out that Vancouver Coastal Health received the lowest lift of any health authority – about \$4 million over this year's actual expenditures, or about two percent. VCH faced a \$40 million budget shortfall last year and are projecting the same again by this fiscal year end. The region has the second fastest growing population in the province and faces greater costs than other regions due to the complex cases from around the province that end up in Vancouver.

"Health authorities are mandated by government to stay within budget but are not given enough funding to meet the realities of population growth, demand or inflation. Cuts to patient services will be the only way to come within the limits the Campbell government has set, said Dix.

"Two per cent does not keep up with the pressure put on Vancouver Coastal hospitals – not even close. This is a punitive move and shows once again just how vindictive Gordon Campbell can be to health authorities that don't toe his line."

Last year, the Minister of Health fired the board chair for trying to deal with the deficit when VCH announced it would have to cope by cutting acute care and emergency services. Meanwhile, there has been a 4.5 per cent increase in emergency room visits and a seven per cent increase in admissions to hospital from emergency at Vancouver General alone.

"When you factor in the existing deficit, demand pressures, population growth and inflation figures, it will mean serious cuts to patient services, said Dix.

"B.C. has fallen from second to seventh place in per capita health spending and you can't do nearly as well in seventh place as you can in second. Gordon Campbell has his priorities wrong – there is a clear lack of commitment from this government to maintaining a strong public health system for British Columbians."

Ida Goodreau, CEO for VCH, has explained that the area has greater pressures than other regions because of the comprehensive care offered in Vancouver hospitals, the fact the region faces greater costs than other regions, and the province sends the difficult cases to the lower mainland. Vancouver Coastal population is expected to grow by 2.2 per cent and Fraser is expected to grow by 3.8 per cent from 2008 to 2010.

"It appears that Gordon Campbell lacks confidence in Vancouver Coastal Health's management, but taking it out on patients is unacceptable," said Dix.

– 30 –