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HEALTH SUSTAINABILITY BILL OPENS DOOR TO MORE LIBERAL OFFLOADING

VICTORIA — Today's new bill that will place sustainability among the underlying principles of health care in B.C. opens the door to new attacks on British Columbians' access to health services, according to New Democrat Health Critic Adrian Dix.

"For years the B.C. Liberals have tried to undermine health care by arguing that it is unsustainable, but the facts say something else," said Dix, the MLA for Vancouver – Kingsway. "In fact, the B.C. Liberals don't want to fully fund health care, and on their watch per capita health care spending in B.C. has fallen from second to seventh place among Canadian provinces."

Health spending as a percentage of B.C.'s Gross Domestic Product was 7.4 per cent in 2001/02, and decreased to 6.9 per cent in 2006/07. Dix said the government has raised MSP premiums by 50 per cent and delisted services including vision care and physiotherapy, throwing costs onto patients and private insurance plans.

"Bill 21 is about offloading health costs onto the backs of patients. While the Campbell Liberals question the sustainability of public health care, failed experiments in for-profit health care in the public system prove that it is private health care that is not sustainable," he said.

"While British Columbians who took part in the Conversation on Health talked about the availability and quality of care, Gordon Campbell and George Abbott talked about an undefined concept of sustainability. Bill 21 focuses on sustainability and ignores the wishes of British Columbians," he added.

"B.C. is routinely fined by the federal government for breaking the Canada Health Act," Dix said. "We need a health minister who will focus on improving health care and meeting the principles of the Canada Health Act."

"The New Democrat approach to health care focuses on a commitment to quality using an evidence-based approach to assess reforms that will improve care."

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