

BULLETIN

Provincial government breaks health care promise

December 1, 2009

The Report: December 2009 vol.30 num.5

AFTER ELECTION PROMISE TO PROTECT HEALTH, CAMPBELL MAKES DEEP CUTS THAT WILL RAISE COSTS IN THE LONG TERM

DURING THE PROVINCIAL election earlier this year, Premier Gordon Campbell promised there would be no cuts to health care despite BC's worsening financial situation.

Just two months later, that promise began to unravel.

On July 15, new Health Minister Kevin Falcon instructed BC's health authorities to find \$360 million in savings. Since then, each new day seems to bring news of cuts to programs and services.

The full impact is still not known. Fraser Health Authority is cutting \$160 million. Vancouver Island Health Authority is cutting \$45 million. Vancouver Coastal is cutting \$90 million. Interior Health is cutting \$50 million.

Many more cuts are yet to be announced, but already it's clear that the impact on patients is severe. Seniors, the mentally ill and those with addiction issues are hardest hit, but with dramatic MRI reductions and some 10,000 elective surgeries cancelled, everyone will feel the impact.

Beyond the immediate impact on the lives of the sick and vulnerable, these cuts appear to sacrifice long-term cost control in favour of temporary, short-term gains, undermining government claims to fiscal responsibility. Delaying diagnostic services leaves people sicker and more costly to treat, while cutting addiction treatment increases costs to the courts system and contributes to greater addiction-related illness.

Further coverage of the specific cuts will be provided in future issues of *The Report*. 

Here are some of the \$360 million in cuts announced to date:

- cancelled 328 knee and hip operations for people living in the Interior
- cut funding for Atlas Youth Supported Recovery in Terrace, the only residential recovery centre for youth in BC's Northwest
- cut funding to help young children access Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention autism program at Queen Alexandra Centre for Children
- cut 760 elective surgeries and 3000 MRIs on Vancouver Island
- cut almost 10,000 MRIs -- and possibly cutting 6000 surgeries and closing 25% of operating rooms -- in the Vancouver health region
- cut funding for North Shore Keep Well Society, which helps keep 500 seniors healthy, and Seniors One Stop, which gets 5000 calls yearly
- cut funding for the award-winning West Coast Alternatives Society, where drug and alcohol programs for adults, youths and children help 600 residents a year
- cut \$2 million from contracts with community agencies and non-profit societies delivering health services in the Victoria area
- closed a 36-bed geriatric assessment and rehabilitation unit at Victoria General Hospital
- closed 25-bed convalescent care unit and an 8-bed hospice at Queens Park Care Centre in New Westminster
- closing adolescent psychiatric unit at Abbotsford Hospital
- cut social work budget in Fraser Health region hospitals, resulting in loss of 14 positions
- cut funding for 11 residential care beds at Bear Creek Lodge and 11 residential care beds at Newton Regency in Surrey
- closed 42 residential care beds at Peace Arch Hospital
- eliminated key staff for Infant Development Program, Aboriginal Development Program and Supported Child Development Program, leaving parents with special needs kids with less support

Type:
[The Report](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017