



Adrian Dix: treat health care workers with respect

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADER ADRIAN DIX told HSA delegates his party is committed to building a stronger provincial health care system in order to build prosperity in British Columbia.

"We have to respond to the challenges of the public health care system in the 21st century that's under attack from Ottawa and under attack from private interest and this current government in our province," said Dix to a ballroom of several hundred HSA delegates from across B.C.

The former health critic said the B.C. Liberal government has received a six per cent increase in federal grants from Health Canada annually over the last 10 years, but squandered the chance to improve health services in this time.

This should have been a period for innovation in health care, said Dix, but instead the B.C. Liberals have invested in costly private-public partnerships and dumped \$450 million into the Abbotsford Regional Hospital, without increasing the number of acute-care beds in the province.

Meanwhile, problems such as soaring prescription drug prices and long wait times for MRIs and other diagnostic services have continued to plague British Columbians over the last decade, said Dix, who pointed out that Alberta budgets 24 per cent more on health care per person than in B.C.

"We can do better than this and we will have to because the current Liberal government in British Columbia places the support of Mr. Harper for their provincial political goals before the public health care system."

He added the B.C. Liberals have supported cuts in federal transfer payments in 2013 to 2014, which will present more challenges to maintain services and keep bringing people into the health care system to meet future demands.

For Dix, having a strong public health care system is necessary to ensure a prosperous economy and investment in the province.

"One of the reasons our economy is more efficient than the United States, one of the reasons this is a better place to invest than the United States is that we have public health care in Canada," he said.

Dix, whose party was coming off two big by-election wins the night before, praised the efforts of HSA members and other health care professionals in the province for their commitment in maintaining a high level of health services despite cuts.

"Our health care workers at every level perform in a more productive way than almost any other health care workers in North America," he said. "They deliver absolutely outstanding outcomes and they have not been treated with respect."

Premier Christy Clark was also invited to address the convention but she declined the invitation. 

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