

news release

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No-news budget bad news for health care

In spite of a budget speech that boasts a commitment to health care, British Columbians should brace themselves for another round of cuts to health care services around the province, Reid Johnson, President of the Health Sciences Association of BC said in response to the provincial budget released today.

“With a status quo budget for health care, we know that health authorities will be forced to continue to cut services as they have been doing the past year,” Johnson said.

For the past several months, health authorities around the province have been cutting services in order to balance budgets. For example, the Fraser Health Authority, where CEO Nigel Murray didn’t want to “waste a good recession,” MRIs were cut, elective surgeries were reduced, beds were closed, and parking fees were increased. They also cut programs, including youth psychiatric services, and funding for a variety of community programs delivering services throughout the region.

“Across the province, the story is the same,” said Johnson. “it’s clear that the impact on patients is severe. Seniors, the mentally ill, and those with addictions issues are hardest hit, but with dramatic MRI reductions and some 10,000 elective surgeries cancelled, everyone is feeling the impact,” he said.

Johnson said the cuts appear to sacrifice long-term cost control in favour of temporary, short-term gains, undermining government claims to fiscal responsibility.

Johnson also said he is disappointed the budget doesn’t provide for a strategy to address the long term and increasingly urgent crisis of shortages in the modern health care team.

“Health care is built on a team that delivers the outstanding service British Columbians rely on. Shortages in critical areas need to be addressed. Without a complete health care team, the long-term consequences of delayed diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation will only get worse,” Johnson said.

“Just because you aren’t diagnosed, doesn’t mean you’re not sick. The longer it takes to get a diagnosis, chances are you will be sicker and require more complex and expensive treatment and rehabilitation, he said.

Health Sciences Association of BC is the union that represents 16,000 health science professionals in BC hospitals and communities who deliver specialized diagnostic, clinical and rehabilitation services.