



Surgery Waitlist Strategy Announcement

Premier Gordon Campbell February 1, 2006

Check Against Delivery

I want to take a moment here before we start just to say thank you to the many representatives we have — the nurses, the doctors, the people from Vancouver Coastal and the provincial health authority — for the work that they've done.

Over the last four and a half years, we have worked to transform our health care system so that it meets the needs of patients. We're in a hospital, but a hospital is just walls and a ceiling without the people in it that take care of the patients that are here, that are looking for and need and ask for our help.

It's very fortuitous that we're all here today on a day that we have received some, I think, pretty good news that British Columbians should at least reflect on. The Conference Board of Canada has said that B.C. was the top-ranked province for Canada overall in terms of health care. We are the top health performer in the country, and we're the top performer in health outcomes. That's because of the health professionals, the health caregivers, the 120,000 people who are involved in delivering health services across this province. They're the ones that make our health system work, and they're the ones that will give the ideas and fuel the activities that will improve things in the future.

Yesterday the Cancer Advocacy Coalition report card said that B.C. had the best-funded, most timely access to cancer drugs with a strong, well-organized population-based cancer control program — again, a reflection of the professionals that we have here in British Columbia and the work that they've done. Indeed, what the advocacy coalition has said is that the B.C. system should serve as a model for the rest of the country.

We can't ask more from our health professionals than that kind of performance, and I want to say thank you to all of them for the work they do on behalf of patients in every corner of this province.

We recognized when we were elected in 2001 that we had some challenges that we faced in health care, and we've outlined a number of those over the last number of years. One of the most important is we have a rapidly aging population. Our population is living longer and healthier lives, and because they're living longer and healthier lives there is more and more demand being placed on our health care system, particularly in the area of hip and knee replacements.

One of the challenges that we've faced is that even though we have increased the number of hip replacements by 35 percent — well ahead of what the population growth has been in the province — and we've increased the number of knee replacements by 65 percent — again, well ahead of the population growth in the province — we have still been falling behind, and we're not happy with the results that we have.

So through professional leadership of the people that were involved with orthopedics here in the province, they said: let's try to do something different. Let's take on the past and let's try and look for new ways that we can deliver services to people.

In 2003 we launched the Richmond hip and knee replacement program to see what we could learn, to see if we could discover new procedures that would allow us to provide better care to patients more quickly. We looked for a 20-percent increase in the kind of output that we had from the facilities and the people that were available. We both met and exceeded that increase.

So when you put in place what is effectively a prototype or a pilot program, what we want to do is try and learn from that, and that's exactly what we've done.

Today I'm pleased to announce that the province will be investing \$60.5 million in a surgical wait time management strategy to deal with the issues of hip and knee replacement and make sure that new knowledge is available throughout the province of British Columbia. We want our orthopaedic surgeons in the north and the Interior and the Kootenays to pick up on the knowledge and the learning that we have from the Richmond Centre.

We will be establishing a brand new centre for surgical innovation right here at the UBC Hospital that will be ongoing, and we will build on that. Two new operating rooms will be opened in this facility that will be specifically targeted to hip and knee replacements. That will be an investment of \$25 million ongoing in 2006 and '07 for the centre here. We believe that will provide additional new knowledge, additional capacity and additional quality of care for people who need hip and knee replacements.

We will also be providing for \$25 million out of this year's budget to really accelerate the number of hips and knees that we're able to deal with throughout the system. The \$25 million will add additional surgeries that we will be doing with health authorities' assistance throughout the province.

On top of those resources to try and deal with this directly we will be contributing \$5.5 million towards a new hip health program at the Vancouver General Hospital. It will look at orthopedics generally. It will examine how we can develop new protocols that hopefully will help people in the long term, again, throughout the province. One of the key goals of this is the sharing of information in hospitals throughout British Columbia so people can benefit regardless of where they live.

There will also be another \$5 million dollars for the creation and the implementation of a provincial surgical patient registry to help better manage the surgery backlogs that we have across the province. Triaging people, looking at alternatives for them in lieu of surgery, etc., will be a critical part of that.

This is a multipronged approach. This is an approach that asks questions as well as delivers better service to patients regardless of where they live in the province. It's an important and critical step. As we learn more we may accelerate the investments that are in place here.

I want to close today by saying this. We are able to be here today because of leadership that we have seen from our health care professionals, because of people that have worked in the authorities to look at better ways of delivering care for patients, and because we identified this as a problem that we had to confront in British Columbia. We know there are challenges in health care. I think the health professionals in this province have done an excellent job of making real progress to deal with the health challenges that patients face.

Hips and knees are something that we want to do much better on and we'll do that because of leadership that we've seen from people like Dr. Bas Masri and others in his profession who have brought new knowledge for us which will bring better care for patients, more timely care for patients, and hopefully we'll be able to reduce these wait times as we look to the future to deliver better service for people across the province of British Columbia. This \$60.5 million is a comprehensive investment in dealing with hip and knee wait times, and we think it's a comprehensive investment in the quality of life for every British Columbian.

Thank you very much



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