



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

of BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 2, 2023

Hon. Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
Room 337, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Dix,

Rural British Columbians have once again been left in the dark about what access they will have to necessary cancer treatment, as there has been no clarity around the recent announcement to send B.C. cancer patients to Bellingham.

The situation is perplexing for individuals, including some of my constituents, who have been refused cancer treatment in Alberta due to the government's lack of coverage for out-of-province care. It raises questions as to why the government is willing to send British Columbians to seek treatment in another country but not allow them to receive treatment in a neighbouring province, which is often geographically closer than the nearest cancer centre in British Columbia.

Due to these areas of confusion, I have two key questions that I hope you can clarify:

1. The travel process requires clarity regarding the points of travel as patients are sent to Bellingham, Washington. Will patients be required to first travel to a regional cancer centre before making their way to Washington State (and if so, why?) or will the travel be arranged directly from their place of residency to Washington?
2. Now that your ministry is showing support for people to receive cross-jurisdictional cancer care in the United States, will the government consider covering B.C. patients who want to receive care in other provinces and if not, why not? This is particularly relevant in my constituency of Kootenay East, where it is much easier and less costly for people to travel to the nearest cancer centre in Alberta than the closest one in British Columbia.

All British Columbians should have equitable access to the same quality of healthcare. Where you live should not determine whether you have access to the same standard of care as other parts of the province. However, this is not always the reality for many British Columbians who do not live in large urban centres, and the confusion surrounding this program only emphasizes this.

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There is a lack of information regarding the specifics of how this program will cater to individuals residing several hours away from their local cancer centre. Waiting for cancer treatment is extremely stressful and the government's announcement has only generated more questions and intensified the concerns and anxieties of affected individuals.

I look forward to hearing the answers to these questions.

Sincerely,

Tom Shypitka
MLA, Kootenay East

CC: Shirley Bond, MLA Prince George-Valemount, Shadow Minister for Health